Convention on the Rights of the Child

Distr.: General
16 March 2018
English
Original: Arabic
Arabic, English, French and Spanish only

Committee on the Rights of the Child

Fourth to sixth periodic reports submitted by Bahrain under article 44 of the Convention, due in 2017*

[Date received: 11 September 2017]

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

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I. Introduction

1. Bahrain aspires to adopt the principles enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to take action on the observations concerning its periodic reports issued by the Committee on the Rights of the Child and to closely monitor progress in the children's sector. In line with the recommendation of the Committee on the Rights of the Child contained in paragraph 77 of its concluding observations (CRC/C/BHR/CO/2-3), Bahrain hereby submits its combined fourth to sixth periodic reports, in accordance with article 44 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, for the period from 2011 to 2016. The present report reviews the progress made by Bahrain in terms of the measures taken, the resources allocated, and the legislation, policies, programmes and strategies developed with a view to implementing the Convention and responding to the Committee's concluding observations on the combined second and third periodic reports of Bahrain (CRC/C/BHR/2-3).

2. The present report was prepared in accordance with the guidelines regarding the form and content of periodic reports adopted by the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC/C/58/Rev.3). It was prepared through a participatory process involving relevant stakeholders: ministries, national institutions, and NGOs working in the field of children's rights and represented in the National Committee on Childhood.

3. As Bahrain has not submitted a common core document, this report will contain all relevant information, in accordance with paragraph 9 of the guidelines (CRC/C/58/Rev.3).

II. General measures for the implementation of the Convention

A. The Committee's previous concluding observations

4. We wish to state the following with regard to paragraph 7 of the Committee's concluding observations (CRC/C/BHR/CO/2-3):

Legislative measures

5. Bahrain has taken vigorous action to implement the concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child concerning the combined second and third periodic reports and has introduced important initiatives that have achieved progress in safeguarding and promoting children's rights. During the period between the submission of the previous and present reports of Bahrain, high priority was given to furtherance of the rights of all children living in the country.

Progress with respect to international treaties

6. Bahrain has endeavoured to bolster its interaction with regional and international organizations in the area of child welfare and protection. In addition to the laws listed in the previous report of Bahrain (CRC/C/BHR/2-3), the following laws or treaties were enacted or ratified during the period between the two reports or were not mentioned in the previous report:

(a) The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, ratified in September 2011;

(b) Act No. 17 of 2015 concerning protection from domestic violence;

(c) The Arab Charter on Human Rights ratified in 2006;

(d) Act No. 5 of 2007 on combating begging and homelessness;

(e) Act No. 3 of 2008 concerning the General Authority for Social Insurance;

(f) The Code of Criminal Procedure promulgated by Legislative Decree No. 46 of 2002 and amended by Act No. 41 of 2005;

(g) Act No. 51 of 2006 amending article 8 of the Code of Procedure before Sharia Courts promulgated by Legislative Decree No. 26 of 1986;

(h) Act No. 15 of 2007 concerning narcotic and psychotropic substances;

(i) Act No. 13 of 2008 concerning ratification of the International Convention against Doping in Sport.

7. In addition, various governmental agencies adopted strategies and action plans, the most important of which are:

(a) The National Strategy for Children 2013–2017;

(b) The National Strategy for Persons with Disabilities 2012–2015;

(c) The National Strategy for Special Education 2013–2017;

(d) The National Plan for the Advancement of Bahraini Women (2013–2022);

(e) The National Strategy for the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence;

(f) The Health Improvement Strategy (2015–2018).

The Committee's recommendation in paragraph 9 of its concluding observations concerning the adoption, as a matter of urgency, of draft laws

8. With a view to safeguarding the rights of children and protecting the nature and stability of the Bahraini family, the Government adopted the Child Act in 2012. It also drafted a bill on correctional justice for children and on their protection from ill-treatment, and adopted Act No. 18 of 2017 on penalties and alternative measures. In preparation for the adoption of the Family Code, Royal Decree No. 24 of 2017 provided for the establishment of a Sharia Committee composed of 10 Sunni and Shiite religious scholars and sharia judges to review the draft Family Code. The Committee was required, pursuant to article 3 of the Royal Decree, to study and review its provisions and to ascertain their conformity with the provisions of the Islamic sharia. This was followed by the promulgation of Act No. 19 of 2017 on the Family Code, which is based, in terms of its form and content, on the overall provisions of the Islamic sharia, while respecting the treaty obligations of Bahrain. Its diverse provisions preserve family rights and specify family duties, taking into account common features and specificities of jurisprudence. It thus enhances the status of the family in society and likewise reflects women's pivotal role and enhances their status in Bahraini society, which is characterized by diversity and pluralism.

9. The Code, which comprises 141 articles, seeks to support the stability of the Bahraini family, including all denominations, by guaranteeing the protection of family rights and the observance of family duties based on the provisions of the Islamic sharia, as reflected in the common denominators of Sunni and Jaafari jurisprudence, the aim being to take their specificities into account in different ways, thereby enhancing the role of families in the country's development.

Coordination

Paragraph 11 of the concluding observations concerning coordination

10. The National Committee on Childhood is the official body tasked with coordinating all governmental and private bodies and civil society organizations working on behalf of children by means of various procedures. The Committee is responsible for diverse forms of coordination of the child support provided by governmental and private bodies, and for providing advice to all ministries, based on a childhood perspective, concerning a range of projects, decisions and legislative and technical issues. Notwithstanding these efforts, coordination remains a major organizational challenge, especially in light of the multiplicity of stakeholders in areas involving children. The Committee is fully aware of the importance of such coordination and of the need for further action to improve the effectiveness of existing mechanisms and to develop additional mechanisms that recognize the pressing need to build an authentic and effective partnership between all sectors of society concerned with children, including governmental agencies, the family, children, civil society, and NGOs working for and with children.

11. Council of Ministers Decision No. 4 of 2016 restructured the National Committee for Childhood and increased the funds allocated to it, given the importance and scale of its role, so that the Committee could coordinate the efforts of all sectors concerned with childhood. The Committee was composed of representatives of ministries and bodies responsible for children, and two members of civil society associations.

12. One of the most important coordination programmes with governmental and private bodies and civil society institutions involved the development by the National Committee for Childhood of the National Strategy for Children in partnership with all the sectors concerned. In addition, an updated situation analysis of children in Bahrain was conducted in 2012. Civil society organizations played a role in producing the analysis and in involving children from all sectors of society in Bahrain.

Paragraph 13 of the concluding observations concerning the adoption of a comprehensive national plan of action for children

13. The Committee expressed concern in paragraph 12 regarding the possible extension of the strategy beyond 2009. We wish to point out that the strategy referred to in this paragraph is the National Youth Strategy, which targeted people in the 15 to 30 age group and was developed by the General Organization for Youth and Sports for the period 2005–2009. With regard to children, since the submission of its second and third reports (CRC/C/BHR/2-3) in May 2011, Bahrain has launched the following national strategies with a direct bearing on the rights of the child:

(a) The National Strategy for Children

14. The National Committee for Childhood took steps to develop the first National Strategy for Children[1] and a related Action Plan,[2] which were launched on 11 September 2013, in partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in the Gulf region and the Office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Bahrain, after nearly five years' work together with a group of partners that included all governmental and non-governmental bodies working in support of children, as well as academics and experts working for and with children and their parents or guardians. The Strategy focuses on the four principles of the Convention and addresses all aspects of the lives of children living in Bahrain, including foreign children, from birth until the age of 18 years.

(b) The National Strategy for Persons with Disabilities

15. Immediately after ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the National Committee for Persons with Disabilities developed a National Strategy for Persons with Disabilities[3] in cooperation with UNDP. It launched the strategy in 2012 and adopted a National Plan of Action.

(c) The National Youth Strategy and Action Plan

16. The second phase of the National Youth Strategy[4] and its Action Plan were developed in partnership with the UNDP office in Bahrain and in cooperation with a group of experts and specialists in youth development. As in the first phase, the Strategy defines youth as the 15 to 30 age group, so that it overlaps with children in the 15 to 18 age group.

17. It should be noted that Bahrain has achieved remarkable results in terms of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, which include: elimination of extreme poverty; reduction in the proportion of the population suffering from hunger; ensuring access to primary education for all boys and girls; elimination of gender disparities in education at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels; reduction of under-5 mortality; ensuring universal access to reproductive health-care services; reduction of maternal mortality; reduction in the prevalence of HIV/AIDS and ensuring universal access to

[1] Link to the National Strategy for Children website.
[2] Link to the National Strategy for Children Action Plan website.
[3] Link to the National Strategy for Persons with Disabilities website.
[4] Link to the National Youth Strategy website.

treatment for all persons requiring it. Bahrain has achieved Sustainable Development Goals ahead of schedule, and is endeavouring to achieve and exceed the remaining goals ahead of the 2030 deadline.

18. Bahrain ranked 47th out of 188 countries throughout the world in the UNDP Human Development Index. The 2016 report states that the country's rank in the Human Development Index has been steadily increasing since 1990.

19. According to the report, Bahrain has maintained its position among countries with a very high rate of human development. It has also maintained high per capita gross domestic product (GDP), and has achieved life expectancy at birth of 76.7 years and an average of 14.5 years of education.

20. Bahrain reaffirmed its determination to cooperate with the United Nations in producing the third Human Development Report in Bahrain in order to fully achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 during the launching of the 2016 report entitled "Human Development for Everyone" for the first time in Bahrain.

21. Bahrain strives to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and to reach the ultimate goal of improving its citizens' standard of living and providing basic services for all. Its action is based on the criteria of sustainability, competitiveness and high productivity underlying the Bahraini Economic Vision 2030 and the Government's Programme of Action. The goals of the Vision are in fact similar to many of the Sustainable Development Goals.

22. It should be noted that Bahrain has been in the group of countries with a very high human development record for more than eight years. Its focus on comprehensive development, including the empowerment of women in all aspects of life and the development of education, health-care and infrastructure services, have placed it at the forefront of its peers in the region.

Paragraph 15 of the concluding observations concerning the establishment of a national human rights institution

23. Act No. 26 of 2014 established the National Human Rights Institution as a monitoring body that is independent in financial and administrative terms. The fact that it is not subject to supervision or oversight by any governmental agency confirms the independence of the Institution's work. It therefore complies with the Committee's general comment No. 2 (2002) on the role of independent national human rights institutions in the promotion and protection of the rights of the child. The 11 members of the Board of Commissioners are responsible for developing the Institution's action plan, deciding on the manner and timing of the performance of its duties, and determining its procedures.

24. Based on the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2011) and the recommendations made following the debate on the universal periodic review report in 2012, Legislative Decree No. 20 of 2016[5] amending certain provisions of Act No. 26 of 2014 establishing the National Human Rights Institution was promulgated. The composition of the Board of Commissioners was amended to emphasize the independence of the National Human Rights Institution and its conformity with the Paris Principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights. The Institution was assigned broader authority in the area of the promotion and protection of human rights as well as legal, administrative and financial autonomy. The Institution was also given greater authority to perform monitoring activities, receive complaints, provide legal advice and undertake visits to any public place in which human rights violations were allegedly committed. In addition, the Institution was afforded greater access to information as well as authority to take decisions without any influence or interference from any other body. While the Government appoints the president and members of the Institution, it refrains from interfering in its plans, programmes or operating procedures.

[5] Link to the Legislative Decree No. 20 of 2016 website.

25. Notwithstanding the lack of a specific division for children in the administrative structure of the Institution, it should be noted that the preamble to Royal Decree No. 46 of 2009 concerning the establishment of the National Human Rights Institution indicates that the Decree was issued following a review of Legislative Decree No. 16 of 1991 concerning the accession of Bahrain to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Furthermore, independent mechanisms and procedures have been established to receive complaints from or on behalf of children directly without the intervention of governmental bodies, and to oversee the handling of complaints from individuals, including children.

26. During the period from 2011 to June 2017, the Institution received complaints and requests for legal assistance and advice from persons under 18 years of age. It received 83 complaints containing allegations of abuse and 44 requests for legal assistance or advice. The details of the complaints are shown in the annex (table No. 1).

27. In addition to the National Human Rights Institution, the **General Secretariat for Grievances (the Office of the Ombudsman)** was established in the Ministry of the Interior by Decree No. 27 of 2012, as amended by Decree No. 35 of 2013.[6] It is an independent administrative and financial body that exercises its authority and performs its duties in a fully independent manner. It examines complaints submitted to it by persons belonging to all age groups, including persons under the age of 18, against members of the Ministry of the Interior who are alleged to have committed an offence during or in connection with the performance of their duties. If the complaint is upheld, it informs the competent authority of the investigative procedures so that it may take appropriate criminal and disciplinary action. The complainant and the person complained of are informed of the steps taken to examine the complaints and the results thereof.

28. **The Human Rights Department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs**: The mandate and responsibilities of the Ministry of Human Rights, which previously formed part of the mandate of the Ministry of Social Development and Human Rights, were assigned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the establishment of a special Human Rights Department by Decree No. 68 of 2016. The Department provides opinions and advice on human rights issues referred to it and expresses its views on international human rights treaties that Bahrain wishes to ratify, in coordination with the Ministry's Department of Legal Affairs and competent authorities. Its mandate also includes the following activities: participation in the preparation of reports by Bahrain on international human rights treaties for submission to the competent international monitoring bodies, in coordination with the Ministry's Department of Legal Affairs; preparation of responses to reports by foreign governments on the human rights situation in Bahrain, in coordination with the competent authorities; transmission of information to the State's diplomatic and consular missions abroad concerning the latest human rights developments in the country; keeping abreast of local and international human rights issues, and of relevant meetings and activities held in regional and international organizations, and coordinating the participation of stakeholders within or outside the Ministry; referral of complaints received from abroad regarding human rights violations to the competent authorities and oversight of the response; and preparation of plans and proposals with a view to benefiting from the advisory services and technical assistance provided by international organizations in the area of human rights. The Department also represents the Ministry of Foreign affairs at local, regional and international human rights conferences.

Paragraph 17 of the concluding observations concerning strategic allocations for the implementation of children's rights

29. The procedure adopted in preparing the State budget depends on the general provisions for all the Kingdom's institutions and ministries. As no provision has been made to date for a specific budgetary allocation covering all child-oriented programmes, it is difficult to identify accurately and to assess the impact of expenditure on programmes on behalf of children. Bahrain will investigate appropriate ways and means of assessing whether the resources allocated are sufficient to ensure compliance with the principles enshrined in the Convention and of calculating the annual budget spent on children.

[6] Link to the Office of the Ombudsman website.

However, while there is no system for monitoring the specific impact of budgetary expenditure on behalf of children, Bahrain monitors annual expenditure, in the form of monthly and other benefits, on services for children, both within and outside families or foster families, especially low-income families. The National Committee on Childhood also submitted the Committee's general comment No. 19 (2016) on public budgeting for the realization of children's rights, concerning article 4 of the Convention, to the Ministry of Finance and the Finance Committee of the Chamber of Deputies so that they could look into the matter. It was agreed to seek technical assistance from UNICEF.

Paragraph 19 of the concluding observations concerning the establishment of a central mechanism for the collection and analysis of data concerning children

30. The Information and eGovernment Authority, which was created through a merger of the Central Informatics Organization (which existed at the time of submission of the second and third combined periodic reports of Bahrain in 2011) and the eGovernment Authority, is responsible for e-government pursuant to Decree No. 69 of 2015. The Authority is tasked, inter alia, with preparing the population census, birth, marriage, divorce and household expenditure data, as well as other basic data concerning all members of the population of Bahrain, in accordance with international standards. Basic population data concerning the 0–18 age group are maintained in the Central Population Registry database. Basic characteristics are collected instantaneously and automatically from the date of birth, and anyone interested in obtaining information on children can request an extraction from the administrative records of basic demographic tables concerning children in the 0–18 age group (based on age, gender, geographical distribution, enrolment at different levels of education, etc.). The various authorities are provided with a copy of the register pertaining to their field of competence so that they may provide the requisite services. The data maintained in the administrative records of other ministries are forwarded to the Authority for incorporation into the Central Population Registry. With regard to data and indicators that require the conduct of special surveys by the competent authorities and that cannot be consulted in the administrative records (such as indicators of children's right to rest and leisure, etc.), the Authority cooperates with governmental bodies in providing technical and statistical support for the conduct of the surveys, and in providing specialized training for data analysts, drawing on local or international expertise from bodies such as UNICEF.

31. Civil society is also actively involved in the provision of a specialized database on children. The Information Centre for Women and Children, which was established in December 1995, is a key project implemented by the Child and Maternal Welfare Society in Bahrain. The Centre runs an information network that provides the Kingdom of Bahrain with educational, health-related, social and economic data on women and children.

Paragraph 23 of the concluding observations concerning the dissemination and promotion of the Convention

32. The National Committee for Childhood has taken a number of steps to develop programmes aimed at disseminating the principles and provisions of the Convention, in accordance with article 42, by appropriate and active means. The Committee acts in cooperation with partners such as the Ministry of Information Affairs, the Child Protection Centre, the National Human Rights Institution and the Ministry of Education, and in cooperation with NGOs engaged in supporting the rights of children, such as the Bahrain Society for Child Development. This participatory approach has resulted, as set out below, in broader dissemination of the principles and provisions of the Convention:

(a) Ten thousand copies of the Convention were distributed to all schools in Bahrain in 2012 as well as to youth centres and social centres. Various publications, including simplified copies of the Convention, and guides for professional staff and families have also been produced and distributed to the Kingdom's schools, families, child welfare centres and primary health-care centres;

(b) Several governmental bodies undertake diverse activities aimed at raising community awareness of children's rights. In particular, the Ministry of Information Affairs implements continuous programmes involving the organization of seminars, radio and television interviews, and meetings with experts, specialists and stakeholders concerning

diverse children's rights enshrined in the Convention, including the rights of children with special needs, their integration into society, early detection of disability, building of a culture of dialogue and participation, violence against children and ill-treatment of children. The seminars and dialogues focus on the role of parents and professionals working with children in promoting children's rights. In addition, television programmes have broken the silence concerning subjects that had previously been considered "taboo", for instance transmission of HIV/AIDS. Patients were interviewed to highlight their families' and children's suffering as well as procedures for handling and treating the disease. A dialogue was held on "gender identity disorder" and descriptions were heard of affected persons' suffering as children at school and in the family and society;

(c) As part of the National Strategy for Childhood Action Plan, and with a view to raising awareness of the Strategy, Radio Bahrain pursues a programme policy that seeks to promote the values, principles and rights enshrined in the Convention. Bahraini television and radio have broadcast a variety of programmes aimed at promoting an understanding of such rights in a stimulating, simple and balanced manner. The following are the most important programmes:

Television programmes

The following programmes, which were broadcast on Bahraini television in 2015 and 2016, targeted interested parties and specialists as well as the community in general, and children themselves participated in some of them:

1. **The Hala Bahrain programme**: This daily programme, which is broadcast in the morning and repeated in the evening, attracts a wide audience of viewers. The most important programmes broadcast during the period in question concerned the following topics: how to deal with child autism; children's theatre and its national role; and a report on the short story competition concerning child care and motherhood.

2. **The Family Counselling programme**: It includes topics relating to children's rights such as: "How to protect our children from modern technology"; "Verbal and physical violence against children"; "The impact of cartoons on children"; "Raising children's awareness of types of sexual harassment"; "Basic psychological education for children"; and "Citizenship and children (love of homeland and belonging)".

3. **Other diverse weekly recreational and educational programmes** involving children themselves, such as "Our new neighbourhood", "Children.com" and "Pulse".

Radio programmes

In response to points 2, 3 and 4 of the National Strategy for Childhood, which focused on raising awareness of health and promoting healthy living conditions, a specialized weekly radio health programme was broadcast:

1. **"Elixir of life"**: the programme was broadcast in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and hosted many doctors and specialized consultants. It addressed child and maternity health-care issues and discussed ways of alleviating, treating and healing them. The daily programme "Good morning, Bahrain" addressed similar issues through weekly meetings and messages from the Ministry of Health.

2. In accordance with points 7 and 8 of the National Strategy for Childhood Action Plan, which dealt with the integration of persons with disabilities and groups with special needs, and the expansion of their participation in activities and programmes, the radio broadcast two programmes, "Hand in hand" and "We exist", for more than three years to discuss all aspects of disability and special needs. Staff from relevant centres and institutes as well as affected families were hosted in order to promote awareness of their role and of proper means of health and psychological care. This issue was also addressed in many episodes of the programme "Good morning, Bahrain".

3. In accordance with points 17 and 18 of the National Strategy for Childhood Action Plan concerning support for children's participation in the media and various other areas, the radio broadcasts an annual Ramadan competition entitled "Hashtag". It is a 100

per cent awareness-raising competition for children, the aim being to raise their awareness of various aspects of life, and to boost their confidence, develop their communication skills and encourage them to participate by offering incentives.

Paragraph 25 of the concluding observations concerning the training of professionals working with children

Ministry of Labour and Social Development

33. Kindergartens are supervised by the Ministry of Labour and Social Development. The promulgation of Decree No. 11 of 2014 on the establishment of kindergartens was followed by the promulgation of regulations concerning standards, specifications and conditions governing kindergartens, facilities and vacancies. The Ministry organizes training workshops for teachers working in kindergartens to build their capacity to provide early childhood care. It also seeks to prepare teachers working with children and mothers to understand and meet children's needs, for instance:

- How to acquire positive modes of conduct;
- The art of dealing with children;
- How to answer my child's questions;
- Talk to me and convince me;
- My success comes from the success of my education.

Training in educational establishments

34. The Ministry of Education aspires to provide appropriate training for all its members with a view to preparing specialized staff who are qualified to cater for students' needs. The Ministry takes the following measures in this context:

(a) Training of teachers at various levels of public-school education, and involving kindergarten teachers in a range of activities, workshops and training programmes in order to build their professional skills to cater for pupils and students in coordination with the relevant authorities; during the 2015/16 academic year, 400 kindergarten teachers were trained;

(b) Introduction of teacher training courses in child psychology and in effective educational procedures, as well as provision for on-site teacher training;

(c) Establishment of a psychosocial counselling centre for students and arranging for the presence of a social worker in all schools for every 250 students to provide social guidance, solve behavioural problems and communicate with families concerning such problems.

Training in the Ministry of the Interior

35. The Ministry of the Interior aspires to provide training for all its employees and to raise their awareness of human rights, including the rights of the child and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and to provide both theoretical and practical training in its principles for staff of the Ministry who work with children and for its missions based abroad, in order to ensure that they perform their duties and implement their lofty mandate to protect national values and assets and maintain the safety and security of citizens and residents through the proper implementation of the law and the achievement of justice. Extensive training programmes have been organized on general legal principles and the application of all international standards, particularly the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention against Torture, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and Bahraini legislation aimed at bolstering human rights concepts for public security personnel. Details of the training programmes are provided in paragraphs 226 and 227 of this report.

Paragraph 27 of the concluding observations concerning cooperation with civil society

36. Bahrain has a large, effective, strong and influential civil society. Many civil society institutions are also actively involved in the preparation and implementation of activities and programmes that promote human rights in general and children's rights in particular. In line with the recommendation of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the State has taken serious steps to encourage civil society institutions, associations and organizations operating in Bahrain in all areas related to children's rights to act as a partner in the implementation of programmes.

37. Given the importance of this role, the Ministry of Labour and Social Development established the National Centre for the Promotion of Civil Society Organizations in 2006. It also provides grants in the form of financial allocations, for which civil society institutions compete in order to implement their programmes. If the associations propose programmes, they are provided with all the logistical and material assistance that they require to implement the projects. Mention may be made, for example, of the Bahraini Child Development Association, which won the Civil Society Organization Grant Programme award for 2011 for the project to hold a conference on "The role of civil society institutions and organizations in preventing disabilities in countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council". The aim was to change society's perception of disability as well as persons with disabilities' perception of themselves, to include the issue of disability among the priorities of Arab governments and to make available the necessary funds, to guarantee access to health, welfare and rehabilitation services for children with disabilities, wherever they may be, to undertake research and studies on childhood and disability, and to implement programmes for early detection of disability as well as family and society awareness-raising programmes on the causes of disability and means of preventing it.

III. Definition of the child (article 1 of the Convention)

Paragraph 29 of the concluding observations concerning the definition of the child

38. The goal of raising the age of marriage to 18 years in order to comply with the Convention continues to pose a major challenge for Bahrain on grounds that are not concealed from anyone, including those attributable to religion and society. Bahrain is therefore gradually taking steps to prohibit child marriage. It also continues to take vigorous action to raise awareness of the consequences of child marriage, which may prevent children from exercising some of their rights under the Convention.

39. The statistics show a decline in the number of marriages of children aged 15 years from 46 in 2012 to 37 in 2016. According to the tables, the vast majority of child marriages involve girls aged 17 years and comprise both Bahraini girls and girls from communities resident in Bahrain (see tables Nos. 5–9).

40. With a view to gradually raising the age of marriage, the Minister of Justice, Islamic Affairs and Religious Endowments issued Decision No. 1 of 2016 on the list of officials authorized to perform civil marriages and the provisions governing personal status documents. Article 12 of the Decision stipulates that: "A marriage contract and its documentation shall be issued provided that the married couple is not less than 16 years of age at the time of their issuance. At the request of the parties concerned, permission may be obtained from the competent sharia court for marriage between persons under the age of 16 once the appropriateness of the marriage has been ascertained by a decision issued by the counselling chamber as a matter of urgency."

41. Pursuant to article 20 of the recently promulgated Family Code, a girl under 16 years of age may not marry without obtaining permission from the sharia court, which is required to ascertain the appropriateness of the marriage.

IV. General principles (articles 2, 3, 6 and 12 of the Convention)

(a) Non-discrimination

Paragraph 31 of the concluding observations

42. Bahrain has made significant progress towards achieving equality for all citizens and towards eliminating discrimination against girls. Article 18 of Chapter III of the 2002 Constitution of Bahrain stipulates that: "People are equal in human dignity, and citizens are equal before the law in regard to public rights and duties. There shall be no discrimination among them on the basis of sex, origin, language or religion." No form of discrimination between persons is permissible in law or in practice on sexual or any other grounds, including disability.

43. As Bahrain is a small country, ease of access to diverse services is guaranteed in all regions. For example, boys and girls in both urban and rural areas enjoy full and equal access to education. Every child has access to educational establishments throughout the country. Schools at the primary, intermediate and secondary level are provided in proportion to the number of children of school age resident in both rural and urban areas. Gender equality in school enrolment and other areas has existed in Bahrain for decades. Discrimination against the girl child is therefore not an issue in Bahrain.

44. With regard to the issue of discrimination between males and females in terms of inheritance, article 2 of the Constitution of Bahrain stipulates that: "The religion of the state is Islam and the Islamic sharia is the principal source of legislation." Article 4 (d) stipulates that: "Inheritance is a guaranteed right governed by the Islamic sharia." Accordingly, the distribution of an estate is governed by the Islamic sharia.

45. With regard to the Committee's concern regarding discrimination in obtaining access to Bahraini citizenship against children born to a Bahraini mother and a non-Bahraini father, a bill has been tabled which, once adopted, will permit children to acquire the nationality of their Bahraini mother. The bill is being discussed by the legislature at the time of compilation of this report. Furthermore, Act No. 35 of 2009 provides for the treatment of children of Bahraini women married to foreigners as Bahrainis in terms of housing, health-care and educational fees as well as some governmental fees.

(b) Best interests of the child

Paragraph 33 of the concluding observations concerning the best interests of the child

46. The Family Code of 2017 and the Child Act of 2012 give priority to the best interests of the child in decision-making and the settlement of disputes concerning matters of custody, guardianship and maintenance based on legal articles affecting the child's life and growth. Key items addressed in the Family Code include catering for children's needs, education, welfare and upbringing (arts. 62 to 67). The child's interests are also a key component of the Family Code provisions governing custody following the break-up of a marital relationship (arts. 123 to 139). The Family Code prohibits the enforcement of a custody and visitation judgment in cases in which a child requires psychological protection and removal from an atmosphere of violence. It also requires visits to be conducted in a place and at a time that will not have an adverse psychological impact on the child (art. 139).

47. With a view to promoting the best interests of the child, article 12 of the Restorative Justice Bill identifies 11 cases in which children are at risk and prescribes a set of measures to be taken instead of traditional penalties in order to preserve the best interests of each child. Details are provided in paragraph 219 (g) on juvenile justice.

48. Bahrain has also taken serious steps to promote respect for and full implementation of the general principle of the best interests of the child in all measures concerning children undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, and in all measures and decisions concerning children taken by administrative authorities and courts when addressing personal status issues.

49. With regard to the assignment of priority to the best interests of the child in awards of custody and decision-making procedures, the Ministry of Labour and Social Development recommends that juvenile court judges withdraw custody from one guardian and award it to another, withdraw custody from the parents and award it to relatives, or withdraw custody from all of them and refer the child to a specialized State body when parental abuse of the child is ascertained, with a view to ensuring that priority is given to the best interests of the child and that his or her views are taken into account before and during the adoption of any decision.

50. Importance is also attached to the principle of the best interests of the child when considering the eligibility of foster parents and selecting suitable foster families.

(c) The right to life, survival and development

Paragraph 34 of the concluding observations concerning the maintenance of the State party's high levels of development, in accordance with paragraph 35 (a), (b) and (c)

51. The Committee commended Bahrain on its success in reducing child and maternal mortality, and the health indicators for the period between the two reports (2011–2016) show that there has been significant progress in the country's vital statistics. However, while there was a decline in the infant mortality rate from 8.6 per 1,000 live births in 2000 to 7.6 in 2013, a slight increase to 10.4 was recorded in 2014. On observing these indicators, the Ministry of Health took a number of steps to ascertain the causes of the higher rate. It discovered that it could be primarily attributed to an increase in the number of premature births.

52. The data also indicate that the rise in the infant mortality rate was concentrated in the first year of life and, in particular, in the first week after birth (neonatal mortality rate) for the following reasons:

(a) The ongoing rise in the premature birth rate, which increased by 38 per cent between 2010 and 2014;

(b) The rise in the proportion of infants recording a subnormal weight at birth, which increased by 31 per cent between 2010 and 2014;

(c) The rise in the number of pregnant mothers carrying more than one fetus, which may lead to premature birth and subnormal weight at birth, entailing the health risks mentioned above;

(d) The increased use of fertility treatment, which leads to an increase in the number of pregnant mothers with more than one fetus, entailing the problems mentioned above;

(e) The under-5 child mortality rate dropped from 11.4 per 1,000 live births in 2000 to 9.1 in 2013. However, it increased to 12 per 1,000 live births in 2014.

53. In light of these data, the Ministry of Health has taken vigorous action to address the causes of the high infant mortality rate and to protect the infants' right to survival. The measures taken are summarized below:

(a) Action to raise the standard of health care provided to newborn and preterm infants by updating and equipping the intensive care unit at Salmaniya Medical Complex with the latest technology and medical devices, in accordance with international standards;

(b) Appointment of qualified medical personnel possessing the skills, competence and advanced training required to treat children in this category, and promotion of scientific lectures and workshops targeting nurses and doctors;

(c) Establishment of a maximum care unit for newborn babies in King Hamad University Hospital, which is equipped with 34 beds to accommodate infants; other facilities are Salmaniya Medical Complex, which is the main centre for the care of preterm infants in Bahrain and has 50 beds, the Bahrain Defence Force Hospital, and Jidhafs Maternity Hospital, which has a support unit with 21 beds to provide care for stable cases of newborn and preterm infants;

(d) Bolstering of cooperation between the Infection Control Committee and the Premature Infant Care Unit in order to tackle the causes of infection in the Unit; this action has resulted in a significant reduction in the number of cases of enterocolitis;

(e) Regular discussions of the complications of pathology and mortality; a summary of such cases, their causes and procedures that help to reduce or eliminate them is submitted to the Department's Committee on Pathology and Mortality, which forwards it in turn to the Central Committee;

(f) Observance of World Prematurity Day in November each year by organizing activities for the parents of preterm infants aimed at raising their health awareness, and by convening a scientific forum to provide further training and enhance the awareness of providers of health-care services for preterm infants;

(g) Provision of continuous and comprehensive health-care services to expectant mothers who are most likely to give birth prematurely, and provision of medicines that help to prevent, as far as possible, premature births.

54. With regard to the Committee's recommendation to maintain current levels of funding for programmes relating to child education, health and protection, we wish to inform the Committee of the aspiration of Bahrain to sustain the funding of health, education and protection services and to increase the budgetary allocations that are required to ensure the implementation of programmes and projects. The following action has been taken in this regard:

(a) The proportion of the Government's total budget (including projects) allocated to the Ministry of Health was raised from 7.4 per cent in 2010 to 7.7 per cent in 2014;

(b) Expenditure on behalf of the Ministry of Health (including projects) amounted to 274.4 million Bahraini dinars (BD) in 2014, compared to BD 196.3 million in 2010;

(c) The recurrent expenditure of the Ministry of Health increased by 192.16 per cent between 2001 and 2012, and totalled about BD 262,753 million in 2014, compared to BD 188,308 million in 2010;

(d) Average per capita GDP rose from BD 7,869.6 in 2010 to BD 9,682 in 2014; however, there was an increase in the cost of treatment, on the one hand, and a shortage of health financing alternatives, on the other;

(e) The budget allocated to the Ministry of Education increased from BD 275,782,074 in 2011 to BD 337,524,032 in 2016. There may have been a decrease in the budget allocated to projects for completion of the infrastructure, but there has been a significant increase in the recurrent expenditure budget. The proportion of the budget allocated to education has increased from 8 per cent in 2011 to 9 per cent since 2013 (see table No. 10).

55. With regard to recommendation 35 (c) concerning the protection of children from the effects of political unrest in the streets, and action to ensure that security forces and health professionals dealing with children respect and enforce the Convention, Bahrain wishes to inform the Committee that the National Strategy for Children, which is the country's first child-targeted strategy, includes a general framework for a comprehensive action plan to meet children's various needs and is based on the main principles enshrined in the Convention.

56. Its fifth goal, which focuses on the right to protection, is to assist Bahraini children in adjusting to crises, developing values of tolerance, renouncing violence, and developing skills for dispute settlement, communication and dialogue.

57. In line with its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Bahrain promulgated the Child Act No. 37 of 2012, which guarantees children access to all rights, a safe environment, and safe and healthy growth. It also ensures that children are not exploited in political activities such as rallies and demonstrations.

58. Article 59 of the Act stipulates that: "The exploitation of children for diverse types of organized and unorganized crime, including the cultivation of attitudes of intolerance and hatred and incitement to acts of violence and intimidation, is prohibited." Article 60 of the Act stipulates that: "The exploitation of children in politically motivated rallies, marches and demonstrations is prohibited."

59. Part VIII prescribes penalties for breaches of these articles. Article 68 stipulates that: "Any person who contravenes the provisions of article 59 of this Act shall be liable to a term of imprisonment of at least 1 year and/or to a fine of not more than BD 1,000." Article 69 stipulates that: "Without prejudice to any more severe penalty prescribed under another law, any person who contravenes the provisions of article 60 of this Act shall be liable to a term of imprisonment of at least 1 year and/or a fine of not more than BD 1,000."

Traffic accidents:

60. The mortality rate due to traffic accidents in Bahrain is one of the highest in the world, accounting for 7.3 per cent of all deaths, especially in the 15–29 age group. Table No. 11 shows that deaths were concentrated in the 15–19 age group, with 21 cases recorded during the period 2011–2016. During the same period, 181 very serious injuries were recorded for the 15–19 age group (table No. 12). With a view to reducing traffic accidents and the number of fatalities and serious injuries resulting from them each year, Bahrain has taken a number of legal and awareness-raising measures. With a view to protecting the lives of child passengers in vehicles, article 39 of Act No. 23 of 2014 stipulates that: "The authorities may withdraw a driver's licence for at least 30 days and for a maximum of 60 days if the driver permits children under the age of 10 years to sit in the front seats of the vehicle."

61. In addition, Bahrain takes the necessary measures to protect children from road accidents by monitoring children who have not attained the legal age for driving vehicles and holding them accountable for violations. The Traffic Department of the Ministry of the Interior also promotes traffic awareness campaigns for children. The Department communicates with schools at various levels in order to deliver lectures, organize awareness-raising events and introduce the subject of traffic awareness into the curriculum. The Traffic Department webpage contains a check box under the heading "Children and traffic" that can be accessed to clarify road usage practices.

62. The General Directorate of Traffic in Bahrain seeks to reduce all kinds of traffic accidents by organizing continuous awareness-raising and law enforcement campaigns. The number of licensed vehicles on the streets of Bahrain has reached a total of 544,808 vehicles, which represents an increase of 39,659 vehicles compared with 2013. However, accident rates have declined thanks to the implementation by the Department of Culture of the General Directorate of Traffic of a number of traffic awareness projects, including: A Traffic Approach for Kindergartens (transport and traffic experience); Al Rawda Traffic Project; the Safe Transit Project; the Safe Transport Project, the Safe Use of Bicycles Project; and the Continuous Secondary-level Traffic Awareness Project.

63. As part of its awareness campaigns, the General Directorate of Traffic has organized several events to mark Gulf Traffic Week, for instance the inauguration of the Traffic Village on Amwaj Island to attract citizens, residents and visitors. It was the first of its kind in the region and was designed to establish an interactive traffic-awareness area involving different age groups and activities, such as the launching of the first traffic cinema and traffic brain games for children. A contract was also signed with a company to inaugurate a project aimed at highlighting the importance of seat belts by simulating a traffic accident so that drivers were alerted to the importance of wearing their seat belt. Traffic signs were raised in an area reserved for children, and they were familiarized with bicycle parts and the rules and standards applicable to traffic and to safe and proper riding and driving.

(d) Respect for the views of the child

Paragraph 37 of the concluding observations and the response to subparagraphs (a) and (b)

64. Diverse bodies guarantee children's right to have their views heard and respected on all relevant matters through the procedures and measures implemented by each competent authority.

65. When the National Strategy for Children was being prepared by the National Committee for Childhood, steps were taken to hear children's views and to learn about their attitudes and priorities concerning all matters affecting them, and about their degree of enjoyment of the rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. About 6,840 children representing different age groups and from diverse economic and social backgrounds and geographical areas, including children from Arab and foreign communities living in Bahrain, children with disabilities, children deprived of a family environment, and children from welfare and protection centres, participated in meetings and dialogues held in different locations, during which the children expressed their views by diverse means, including drawings. The meetings and workshops reflected a belief in children's ability to participate actively and directly, and an awareness of the need for the National Strategy to reflect every aspect of all children's aspirations, needs and perspectives.

66. When the child protection centres admit victims of child abuse, violence and neglect, social service providers discuss the complaints with the children themselves after informing them of the secure, confidential and private nature of the information provided. They use their counselling skills when encouraging children to express their views, for instance through drawings under the "Expression of views on violence" programme or through games or other means.

67. The same procedure is applicable when listening to the views of a child victim of domestic violence, especially when the parents are separated. Paramount importance is attached to the child's choice of a custodial parent, especially if one parent is the source or cause of the violence, pending elimination of the grounds for the complaint or the adoption of a judicial decision regarding the custody of the abused child.

68. With a view to hearing children's views in schools, student councils were established at the secondary level and the first elections to the councils were held in 2003. In 2007 the Minister of Education issued a decree regulating the councils and providing instructions to public and private schools. The aims of the councils are as follows: "Participation by students in the management of the school and in taking decisions concerning student-related issues that are not inconsistent with the system"; "Active participation with the councils of parents and teachers in school development"; and "Development of democratic practices, a spirit of constructive dialogue and respect for other people's views".

V. Civil rights and freedoms (articles 7, 8, 13–17 and 37 (a) of the Convention)

(a) Name and nationality

Paragraph 39 of the concluding observations concerning the transfer of Bahraini citizenship to the children of Bahraini mothers married to non-Bahrainis

69. There is currently a bill before the legislature aimed at amending the Citizenship Act so that the children of Bahraini mothers married to foreigners are granted Bahraini citizenship in accordance with objective rules and standards that preserve such persons' rights. The Supreme Council for Women is working with all competent authorities to expedite the adoption of the bill with a view to protecting children's rights in such marriages. The Supreme Council for Women is also giving special attention to the issue of children of Bahraini women who are married to foreigners and is seeking to improve their

situation by promoting the measures required to ensure that they have access to the basic services granted to citizens.

VI. Torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

Paragraph 43 of the concluding observations

70. The Committee recommended in paragraph 43 that measures should be taken to ensure that no child is subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. In line with the aspiration of Bahrain to protect human rights in general and those of young people in particular, safeguards are guaranteed as follows under the Constitution, domestic legislation and orders issued by the competent authorities:

(a) Article 20 of the Constitution of Bahrain stipulates that accused persons shall be deemed innocent until they are proven guilty in legal proceedings in which the right of defence is guaranteed, in accordance with the law, at all stages of the investigation and trial. It prohibits the subjection of accused persons to physical or mental harm. Moreover, all persons charged with an offence must have access, with their consent, to a defence counsel, and the right to litigate is guaranteed under the law.

(b) Articles 208 and 232 of the Criminal Code promulgated by Legislative Decree No. 15 of 1976 provides for the prosecution of any civil servant or officer entrusted with a public service who deliberately inflicts severe physical or mental pain or suffering on a detainee or a person under his control, with a view to obtaining information or a confession from him or another person, punishing him for an act that he or another person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or another person on grounds based on any form of discrimination. Moreover, the statute of limitations is not applicable to offences involving torture.

(c) Pursuant to Decree No. 69 of 2016, the Minister of Labour and Social Development issued a bill establishing the Child Protection Centre, which is tasked with assessing, providing shelters and monitoring cases of children subjected to ill-treatment and with coordinating the services provided to them and their families by the competent authorities.

(d) A new Internal Investigation Department was established in the Ministry of the Interior pursuant to the above-mentioned Legislative Decree creating the Office of the Ombudsman. The Department is tasked with receiving, reviewing and investigating complaints against members of the Public Security Forces who allegedly perpetrate a wrongful act during the performance of their duties.

(e) The Office of the Ombudsman submitted a recommendation to the effect that "inmates in the 15 to 18 age group should be separated from other inmates and treated in a manner designed to meet their diverse needs". Furthermore, inmates in the 15 to 18 age group are admitted to the Nasser Centre for Rehabilitation and Vocational Training, which was officially inaugurated on 17 September 2015.

(f) The Ministry of the Interior issued Ministerial Decree No. 14 of 2012 establishing a Code of Conduct for police officers based on international best practices and the Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, in order to promote principles of transparency, justice, equality and accountability. One of the key provisions of the Code is the absolute prohibition of torture and other forms of ill-treatment.

71. With regard to complaints, Bahraini legislation authorizes the judiciary and some governmental bodies and human rights organizations to make announced and unannounced visits to correctional and rehabilitation facilities, to receive complaints and to meet with inmates in order to ensure that they are not subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment. Article 74 of Decree No. 131 of 2015 concerning the implementing regulations of the Correctional and Rehabilitation Facility Act stipulates that: "The President of the Court of Cassation, the Attorney General, the President of the High Court of Appeal, the

President of the High Criminal Court, the President of the High Civil Court, the enforcement judge and the Attorney General's deputies may, in accordance with their fields of competence, visit and inspect facilities, examine their records and take steps to ensure that all orders of the Public Prosecution Service and the investigating judge and all judicial rulings are implemented in the prescribed manner in the facilities."

72. Article 1 of Decree No. 61 of 2013 stipulates that: "There is hereby established a Commission to be known as the Commission for the Rights of Prisoners and Detainees." It is tasked with monitoring conditions in prisons, detention centres, juvenile welfare centres and all other places, such as hospitals and mental health centres, in which a person may be held in order to ensure that inmates are not subjected to torture or inhuman or degrading treatment. The Commission performs its duties freely, impartially, transparently and in a fully independent manner.

73. The establishment of the Commission was just one of the pioneering measures adopted by Bahrain with a view to promoting respect for human rights principles, particularly through the establishment of independent human rights institutions. The Commission is the first of its kind in the Arab world and serves as an effective national preventive mechanism. It operates in accordance with an advanced vision of the proper treatment of inmates and detainees aimed at ensuring that they are not subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and at promoting the concept of reform, rehabilitation and social reintegration. Between 18 and 20 January 2015, the Commission visited 12 prisons and pretrial and other detention facilities, including unannounced visits to juvenile welfare centres. The findings were published in a detailed report and may be consulted on the Commission's website.[7]

74. The National Human Rights institution receives, studies and investigates complaints concerning human rights. It refers them, when appropriate, to the competent authorities with a view to ensuring effective follow-up, informs the persons concerned about the requisite procedures and offers them assistance in that regard, or assists them in reaching a settlement with the parties concerned. The Institution also monitors cases involving human rights violations, conducting the necessary investigations, and undertaking on-site visits, in accordance with the regulations governing the monitoring of human rights and the rights of children, to correctional institutions, detention facilities, labour demonstrations, health-care and educational establishments, or any other public place where it is suspected that the rights of adults or children may be violated. It then proposes initiatives aimed at preventing such violations and rendering the perpetrators accountable.

Corporal punishment

Paragraph 45 of the concluding observations

In the family

75. The National Strategy for Children includes a section aimed at protecting children from all forms of violence and ill-treatment. The associated Plan of Action also includes initiatives and programmes aimed at ensuring respect for the physical, mental and psychological integrity of children in all circumstances, and at combating violence and other forms of child abuse. Furthermore, the National Strategy for the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence contains a two-part section on prevention, the first of which deals with the prevention of domestic violence against women and children before it occurs. To that end, a number of measures were taken to raise awareness of the devastating impact of corporal punishment on children and to promote alternative methods of upbringing and discipline. The initiatives included awareness-raising programmes organized by the Family and Childhood Department of the Ministry of Labour and Social Development to develop family members' skills, including positive and effective communication skills, and to help them resolve their psychological and social problems. The programmes are implemented through regional social centres, the Child Protection Centre and family guidance offices.

[7] Link to the website containing the report.

Television programmes on sound methods of upbringing are also broadcast on behalf of families.

In educational establishments

76. Corporal punishment in public and private educational establishments is prohibited under the Code of School Discipline promulgated by the Ministry of Education in Decree No. 549/168-1/1992, which was referred to by the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children (GIECP) in the first-cycle report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review (A/HRC/WG.6/1/BHR/3, 6 March 2008).

77. The Ministry of Education supervises and monitors private educational establishments, including kindergartens, both educationally and administratively, to ensure that they comply with the provisions of Legislative Decree No. 25 of 1998 concerning the educational and training establishments, and the relevant implementing decisions, which seek to ensure that children enjoy a safe environment and are not subjected to violence and ill-treatment. Accordingly, the Ministry absolutely prohibits all forms of corporal or psychological punishment of students. It also endeavours to safeguard children and their interests in all relevant regulations and laws, performing its educational duties to the best of its ability on behalf of all students. The Ministry has taken the following measures with that end in view:

- Distribution of leaflets, booklets and manuals to administrative and educational bodies prohibiting corporal or psychological punishment of students, and publication of circulars prohibiting such acts;
- Monitoring of violations, including corporal punishment of students by administrative or educational bodies, and punishment of the perpetrator in accordance with the list of violations and penalties attached to the Civil Service Act and its implementing regulations;
- Use of educational rather than punitive means to address behavioural or disciplinary irregularities in educational establishments, in accordance with the regulations governing school discipline, as amended, the aim being to modify students' behaviour and to promote self-discipline and desired practices. The regulations endeavour to promote behavioural remedies that are based on a sound educational assessment in order to protect children and their interests in all circumstances.

In residential care facilities

78. Corporal punishment is absolutely prohibited by the rules of procedure of Batelco Child Care Centre, the State-run home for children without family care, irrespective of its purpose and degree of severity. Deterrent measures have recently been taken against two staff members. One of the nurses was dismissed after she lightly shoved away a child. A technician was also dismissed for punishing a child with a light blow. The Centre never fails to respond to even less serious acts.

VII. Family environment and alternative care (articles 5, 18 (1) and (2), 9–11, 19–21, 25, 27 (4) and 39 of the Convention)

Family environment

Paragraph 48 of the concluding observations concerning the establishment of family consultation centres

79. Family guidance offices were opened in May 2007 in all social centres throughout the regions and governorates of Bahrain to meet the needs of all members of society, to promote the highest levels of mental health, happiness, satisfaction and family stability, to scale down family problems and disputes and marital discord, and to provide members of society with positive and effective skills that enable them to enjoy the necessary stability and to continue to build the Bahraini family, society and civilization. Legislative Decree No. 22 of 2015 amended certain provisions of the Code of Procedure before Sharia Courts,

which required litigants to resort to the Family Reconciliation Office before filing a case before the sharia courts.

80. The family guidance offices in social centres provide various services and programmes to meet the needs of Bahraini society, including developmental and preventive services designed to bolster the family's role in addressing contemporary challenges and problems, and to assist in resolving problems faced by family members by offering individual and collective guidance as well as advice on using games with children, and by presenting psychological views before the sharia and enforcement courts with a view to achieving happiness, stability and harmony in the family.

81. The Supreme Council for Women is also actively involved, offering many premarital awareness-raising and training programmes on family harmony skills. The programmes are implemented in three stages. The first stage involves awareness-raising for secondary school and university students of both genders. The programmes were implemented, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, in 44 schools and educational establishments on behalf of more than 4,000 students.

82. A group of social workers employed in educational establishments run by the Ministry of Education attended courses enabling them to provide training in family harmony skills with a view to ensuring continuous sharing of knowledge. In addition, the Supreme Council for Women developed a training package to raise the awareness of intermediate-level students in Bahrain of the concepts enshrined in the National Plan for the Advancement of Bahraini Women. The awareness-raising programme was implemented by educational experts as a joint project with the Ministry of Education in 10 intermediate schools (5 for boys and 5 for girls) and in a private school during the academic year 2016/17 as the second stage of the project. The programme will eventually be mainstreamed to cover all intermediate schools in Bahrain.

Alternative care

Paragraph 50 of the concluding observations concerning the provision of protection and an alternative family environment to boys and girls without discrimination

83. Bahrain guarantees protection and family care for children who are deprived of a family environment. The State, represented by the Ministry of Labour and Social Development, has formulated general policies for the care of orphans, children of similar status, children exposed to domestic violence and groups in special circumstances whose parents are unknown. The services include care, education and rehabilitation in social welfare shelters and institutions, or oversight of care provided by foster families.

Batelco Child Care Centre

84. Batelco Child Care Centre was opened on 10 July 1984 as a social welfare facility run by the Ministry of Labour and Social Development. It provides care for children of unknown parents, orphans and children from broken families up to the age of 15 years. Bahraini families accept custody of children, especially infants in the 0 to 3 age group, from Batelco Child Care Centre. During the period from 2012 to 2016, care was provided for 10 male and 16 female children. Table No. 13 shows the number of children for whom alternative care has been provided during the past five years.

The Royal Charity Organization

85. In addition to the alternative care provided by the Batelco Child Care Centre, the Royal Charity Organization, which was established by a Royal Decree promulgated on 14 August 2001, provides for the welfare of orphans by guaranteeing full care for the children concerned while they reside with a parent or their extended family. A second Royal Decree was promulgated to add widows to the beneficiaries of the Organization's services. His Majesty the King is the Honorary President of the Organization and his son presides over the Board of Trustees. The orphans receive personal care from the King, who visits and receives them on a regular basis in addition to sponsoring activities on their behalf.

86. The Organization takes action to promote the welfare of orphans and widows from eligible families, in accordance with its approved conditions and criteria. Monthly benefits are paid, material assistance is provided to all widows and orphans registered with the Royal Charity Organization on the occasion of Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha and during the month of Ramadan, and children are provided with schoolbag essentials. The Organization also provides psychological support services, such as free counselling for persons suffering from loss-related psychological problems. The Guidance Centre assists orphans and widows in adjusting positively to their circumstances and in addressing the difficulties and psychological stress that they currently face or may face in the future by developing their psychological and social concord.

87. The Organization provides educational support for orphans in the form of schoolbags and free access to kindergartens, in cooperation with kindergartens, enterprises and private-sector institutions, depending on the number of places available on an annual basis. Other orphans are provided with free access to private schools, in cooperation with the schools, enterprises and private-sector institutions. In addition, the Organization provides them with assistance, depending on their circumstances, in preparing for final examinations in educational establishments. On completion of their studies, 50 seats are reserved in public and private universities for those who achieve 80 per cent. Support for additional seats is provided by enterprises and private-sector institutions.

88. The Royal Charity Organization provides free counselling and treatment for orphans in a number of private hospitals and clinics. Beneficiaries receive free or low-cost treatment services, medical devices and equipment, and appropriate health-care guidance.

89. The Organization also provides support for orphans' social situation and skills by organizing programmes and activities during the summer and spring holidays and throughout the year, and by organizing training courses to enhance their personalities and develop their talents and pastimes.

Abuse and neglect

Paragraph 52 of the concluding observations concerning a comprehensive law to prevent domestic violence

90. Act No. 17 of 2015[8] concerning protection from domestic violence provides for the protection of family members from physical, psychological and sexual abuse as well as from economic abuse. Article 2 of the Act provides for the establishment in the Ministry of Labour and Social Development of a Family Guidance Department to provide family counselling and awareness services in the area of domestic violence through a number of family counselling centres or offices.

91. The National Committee for Childhood was tasked with elaborating the National Strategy for Children, which was launched in 2013. It provides for action to guarantee children's right to protection from all forms of violence and from exploitation. The Ministry provides the following services and takes the following steps to reduce domestic violence, in cooperation and coordination with all official institutions, in accordance with their fields of competence:

(a) Action to raise public awareness of the dangers and impact of domestic violence, in cooperation with various community centres and the Ministry of Information, including the local press;

(b) Compilation and dissemination of adequate information on family counselling, treatment, rehabilitation and shelter services, how to access such services and the bodies that provide them;

(c) Provision of shelters to accommodate victims of domestic violence, such as the Child Protection Centre, which provides support and protection for child victims of violence, Dar al-Aman (the Safe House) to shelter women victims of violence and their children, family guidance centres, and the "Wudd" Centre, "Mawadda" Centre and Aisha

[8] Link to the website on Act No. 17 of 2015 concerning protection from domestic violence.

Yateem Centre for Victims of Domestic Violence, which are run by civil society organizations and provide family, psychological, social and health counselling services for all family members, as well as rehabilitation services for aggressors and victims of aggression;

(d) Provision of legal assistance, if necessary, to victims and monitoring of criminal proceedings concerning domestic violence through the presence of a representative during court sessions;

(e) Provision of temporary or permanent alternative care when strictly necessary, if experts deem it to be in the best interests of the child;

(f) Appointment of experts to assess the situation of other children in the family;

(g) Rehabilitation of the child and family, and preparation for reintegration of the child into his or her family;

(h) Monitoring of the scholastic, educational, psychological and social situation;

(i) Provision of specialized training programmes and lectures on domestic violence for law enforcement officers, judges and prosecutors;

(j) Dissemination of data on domestic violence and on means of preventing domestic violence without undermining personal freedom and privacy;

(k) Creation of a hotline to receive reports and complaints of cases of domestic violence.

92. The Public Prosecution Service also implements protective measures on behalf of child victims of domestic violence, in accordance with the provisions of the Act concerning protection from domestic violence. The Public Prosecution Service is required to take the following action:

(a) To protect persons who report incidents of domestic violence and to refrain from revealing their names and identity unless judicial proceedings so require;

(b) To verify forthwith all data relating to the report and those involved, including the extent to which violence has been perpetrated against or in the presence of children, or has been extended to children;

(c) To issue immediate orders for treatment of children or, if necessary, to have child victims of domestic violence conveyed as speedily as possible to a shelter;

(d) To issue orders for the protection of victims of domestic violence in general, including orders to prevent exposure to violence, and to prohibit access to the shelter or the place in which the victim is located;

(e) To issue a reasoned temporary ruling that the victim should be removed for protective purposes from his or her family.

93. With regard to family courts, the Third National Conference of Bahraini Women, which was held under the auspices of the wife of the King of Bahrain, who is the President of the Supreme Council for Women, recommended the establishment of an independent building to house family courts in order to preserve the privacy of the family. The recommendations were supported by pro-family activists, and the Supreme Council vigorously advocated the speedy establishment of the courts. His Majesty the King, acting in response to the movement, issued an order in November 2016 concerning the allocation of an independent building for family courts tasked with respecting the specificity of family-related legal issues and expediting such proceedings. The family courts complex, which is in a separate building from the other courts, is currently being inaugurated in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice, Islamic Affairs and Religious Endowments. It provides all the facilities required to address family disputes in a manner that ensures their privacy and that of the family, and that promotes family stability. The building includes a sufficient number of family courts, a family enforcement court, a family reconciliation office and all other family support facilities.

Child helpline 998 (for a safe childhood)

94. With a view to protecting children from violence by providing a means of reporting existing or imminent cases of violence, a child helpline was launched on 27 December 2011. The Child Protection Centre building is the site for all incoming and outgoing calls, since the child helpline forms part of its organizational structure. The helpline is a free telephone line for all children. The Centre's staff are committed to complete confidentiality and are required to respect callers' desire not to provide their names. The service is available 24 hours a day and can be used by children to report cases of violence, ill-treatment or jeopardy. The helpline also offers guidance and listening services, provides psychosocial support for children, arranges for referrals, if necessary, to the relevant authorities, and offers counselling for families or guardians, and legal advice to families. In addition, rapid interventions are undertaken to rescue children in emergencies and in cases where the expert feels that action is required to prevent violence.

95. The Child Protection Centre also organizes many programmes aimed at preventing, reducing and eliminating violence within and outside the family. The programmes target different groups, including children themselves, their parents or guardians, children in juvenile facilities and others. The number of programmes has increased in the past two years. This does not necessarily reflect an exacerbation of the problem of violence against children, but rather action to expand the number of beneficiaries of such programmes.

96. Bahrain has taken determined action to raise parents' awareness of their responsibilities towards their children. The State has conducted educational and media campaigns aimed at raising the awareness of parents and society in general of children's rights through state agencies, especially radio and television channels, and also through educational establishments.

97. For example, the Ministry of Labour and Social Development implements many family development programmes and activities, especially on behalf of families that require support owing to their current circumstances. Premarital counselling is offered to persons of both sexes concerning family composition, how to address family disputes, and how to tackle and help to reduce divorce-related problems. The aim of these programmes is to raise awareness of the family's role vis-à-vis children.

98. The Supreme Council for Women is one of the most active bodies involved in plans and strategies to protect the family. The Department responsible for the National Strategy for the Advancement of Bahraini Women in the Council is tasked with monitoring and developing plans and programmes aimed at raising awareness in the general public of the role of family stability and its impact on all members of the family. It is also tasked with promoting non-violent relations among family members and encouraging dialogue between spouses, on the one hand, and between spouses and their children on the other. The Support and Information Centre for Women run by the Supreme Council for Women also provides family counselling services, legal advice and psychosocial support.

99. These programmes are implemented by the Family Consultancy Section, the Legal Services Section and the Programmes and Projects Section. The following are some of the key programmes implemented during the period 2013–2016:

(a) Legal lectures, in cooperation with lawyers' offices, to raise awareness of family and social issues among complainants (about 16 lectures);

(b) Lectures for persons about to get married and for newlyweds in cooperation with the four governorates (attended by 70 women);

(c) Publication of a premarital guidebook;

(d) Presentation of about 25 items for awareness-raising purposes in a programme on Radio Bahrain;

(e) Presentation of seven items on the "Good Morning Bahrain" radio programme;

(f) Counselling interviews under the psychological and legal support programme for regular visitors to the Centre;

(g) Awareness-raising workshops on family culture for a number of secondary schools, in coordination with the Ministry of the Interior;

(h) Awareness-raising messages regarding family law.

100. Family and child civil society organizations also play an active awareness-raising role, offering guidance to parents on sound upbringing skills, and assisting them in identifying various problems facing their children and in resolving them through special programmes. Many bodies also provide support for families and women, particularly economic support so that they can meet their children's material needs, thereby effectively contributing to the creation of a safe, secure and stable family environment.

101. With regard to the Committee's recommendation to open State-sponsored temporary shelters exclusively for victims of domestic violence, neglect and abuse, Dar al-Aman was opened in 2006 as a free temporary shelter for women victims of domestic violence and their children. It is a model example of social partnership in Bahrain between the Ministry of Labour and Social Development and relevant civil society organizations, and is managed by an NGO. The Aisha Yateem Centre for Victims of Domestic Violence was launched by the private sector.

VIII. Basic health and welfare (articles 6, 18 (3), 23, 24, 26 and 27 (1)–(3) of the Convention)

102. Bahrain has made a great deal of progress in the health sector during the period between its two periodic reports. Its achievements include the following:

(a) The National Health Regulatory Authority was established by Legislative Decree No. 38 of 2009 as the supervisory branch of the Ministry of Health. It monitors the application of professional regulations and the provision of health services in Bahrain, and proposes developments aimed at ensuring high efficiency, safety and effectiveness in the delivery of such services in both the public and private sectors. It has been endowed with legal personality and has been granted financial and administrative autonomy. Accordingly, it is legally entitled to take independent decisions regarding the exercise of its authority, subject to governmental oversight, which was formerly conducted by the Minister of Health and is currently conducted by the Supreme Council for Health.

(b) The Supreme Council for Health was established by Royal Decree No. 5 of 2013 and was assigned important functions in the area of health. It was tasked first and foremost with developing the national health strategy and monitoring its implementation in coordination with ministries and with governmental and private bodies.

(c) In November 2016 the Salmaniya Medical Complex received gold-level certification from Accreditation Canada and the primary health-care clinics received platinum-level certification.

(d) The Health Improvement Strategy (2018–2015) was launched as an extension of the initiatives, projects and programmes implemented under the Bahraini Health Agenda 2011–2014, which led to the improvement and enhancement of health-care services.

(e) The National Health Information System (I-Seha) was launched in 2012 with a view to establishing a unified electronic health-care system linking all health-care facilities to the Ministry of Health and providing information concerning patients to all health-care providers in Bahrain so that each user has a standardized electronic health file.

Children with disabilities

Paragraph 54 (a), (b), (c), (e) and (f) of the concluding observations

103. Bahrain ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in September 2011, and the High Committee for the Welfare of Persons with Disabilities was established under the chairmanship of the Minister of Labour and Social Development. The Committee immediately set about developing the National Strategy for Persons with Disabilities, which was launched in 2012. It also began to prepare the initial report on the

rights of persons with disabilities and is now close to completing it. The Committee hopes to submit the report to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities before the end of this year.

Early detection of childhood disability

104. Article 3 of Act No. 11 of 2004 on premarital medical examinations renders such examinations compulsory for all persons wishing to get married.

105. Article 4 stipulates that: "The physicians tasked with performing the medical examination shall, in light of the results of the examination, provide assistance, advice and guidance to the intending spouses." The purpose of the Act is to prevent the birth of unhealthy children as a result of the marriage of partners who are incompatible on health-related grounds, and to reduce possible risks facing the couple after marriage if one of them suffers from a genetic or serious disease.

106. Primary health-care centres play an important role in the early detection of childhood disability through regular screening of children from the age of 2 months to 5 years. Preschool children are also screened in order to detect problems relating to their development and growth. If a problem is detected, the child is referred to the Growth and Development Clinic at Salmaniya Medical Complex or to the Child and Adolescent Unit at the Psychiatric Hospital.

107. Cases of mental disability are assessed by the Child and Adolescent Unit of the Psychiatric Hospital and by the School Health Section of the Department of Public Health for the 6 to 18 age group. The Growth and Development Clinic at Salmaniya Medical Complex assesses all types of early childhood disabilities.

108. The Abdullah bin Ali Kanoo Centre for the diagnosis and assessment of disability was opened in June 2014 as part of the Comprehensive Disability Complex. The Centre provides comprehensive services for people with disabilities through cooperation between the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labour and Social Development. A multidisciplinary team assesses and diagnoses cases of physical, mental, motor, visual and auditory disabilities.

109. The Health-Care Services Department at the Ministry of Health is responsible for implementing a number of measures aimed at providing health-care services and early disability detection programmes, for example:

(a) Development of early detection, diagnosis, awareness-raising and health education programmes, and provision of early and specialized means of intervention in the area of disability;

(b) Provision of diagnostic, therapeutic and rehabilitation services, and development of existing health-care programmes and services on behalf of persons with disabilities;

(c) Provision of specialist health-care staff for all kinds of disabilities, and organization of regular qualification and training courses;

(d) Undertaking of medical studies to identify the causes and consequences of disabilities and means of preventing them, and dissemination of the studies to the *competent State authorities*.

110. With regard to training programmes, a number of programmes aimed at enabling staff to work with children with disabilities are coordinated by the Child and Adolescent Unit of the Psychiatric Hospital and the School Health Section of the Department of Public Health. Action is also taken to promote continuous cooperation and partnership with relevant institutions and associations, such as the Bahraini Association for Intellectual Disability and Autism, and the Bahrain Association for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, with a view to offering training workshops, as and when required, for instance:

- Training in how to deal with behavioural problems of children with disabilities for Ministry of Education staff working in integration classes;
- Training in how to deal with autism;

- Training for staff of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour and Social Development in how to deal with behavioural disorders.

111. Bahrain has endeavoured to allocate all the facilities and resources required to achieve the greatest possible integration of children with disabilities into all facilities. Article 7 of Act No. 74 of 2006 concerning the welfare, rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities stipulates that persons with disabilities shall be granted a monthly disability allowance, in accordance with the terms and conditions laid down by a ministerial decision endorsed by the High Committee for the Welfare of Persons with Disabilities. Article 8 of the Act stipulates that rehabilitative, medical, educational, technical and assistive devices and equipment for persons with disabilities shall be exempted from fees and taxes, and that the Ministry shall facilitate access to them.

112. The Ministry of Education undertook a comprehensive diagnostic study in late 2012 and the results were used to develop and launch the National Special Education Strategy for 2013–2017. The Strategy aims to provide support for 10,913 children with special needs enrolled in Bahraini schools and for their families so that they have access to comprehensive education in schools and educational centres.

Action by the public and private sectors to provide skills and qualifications for children with disabilities and professionals working in the field of disability

113. A number of governmental bodies have launched training and qualification initiatives on behalf of children with disabilities and professionals working on their behalf in order to enable the children to lead a normal life. Some of the initiatives are listed below:

The Ministry of Labour and Social Development

Shaikhan al-Farsi Comprehensive Speech Centre

114. The Shaikhan al-Farsi Comprehensive Speech Centre was inaugurated in 1997. It is a governmental institution affiliated to the Ministry of Labour and Social Development, which provides rehabilitation and educational services for children with hearing disabilities up to the third grade at the intermediate level. It is an extension of the unit for hearing disabilities at the Rehabilitation Centre, which began to provide services in 1980. The Centre targets children undergoing cochlear implantations and children with hearing disabilities in the 3 to 16 age group.

115. The Shaikhan al-Farsi Comprehensive Speech Centre plays an active role in rehabilitating children with hearing impairments and those with hearing disabilities so that they are able, in linguistic, psychological and social terms, to receive a normal education in ordinary schools, and to engage naturally in educational activities. The Centre also seeks, in line with its stated objectives, "to train the staff employed in the Centre, to build their capacity and to develop their ability to rehabilitate children with hearing disabilities". It is one of the leading centres in the Arab Gulf region and attracts children from other States of the Gulf Cooperation Council. In addition, the Centre trains families to communicate and interact with their children, to develop health awareness and to acquire healthy habits by means of a comprehensive programme on health education and prevention of diseases and accidents.

The academic qualification grant programme for rehabilitation centres working on behalf of persons with disabilities

116. In view of the importance attached by the Ministry to the goal of rehabilitating and empowering persons with disabilities and building their skills to facilitate their integration into society, the Ministry launched, by Cabinet Decision No. 01-2058, the academic qualification grant programme for students with disabilities who are enrolled in community centres specializing in the care and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities. The programme provides grants from the operating budget for the academic year to non-profit-making institutions. The project began in 2010 with a study of the status of the centres working in the area of disability and an examination of their need for material support. The budget for 2010/11 was estimated at BD 1,200,000. The Ministry has taken steps since then

to obtain governmental support to cover the centres' operating costs. It received support for the 2010/11 academic year totalling BD 500,000, covering 48 per cent of the costs of 12 community centres. Governmental support doubled for the 2011/12 and 2012/13 academic years, reaching a total of BD 1.200,000 and covered 84 per cent of the centres' costs. The Ministry is taking vigorous steps to cover 100 per cent of the operating budget of all rehabilitation centres.

Service Centre for Persons with Disabilities ("You are not alone")

117. The Service Centre was inaugurated on 12 December 2007. It is tasked with providing welfare, rehabilitative and professional services to persons with all kinds of disabilities.

118. "Career empowerment" is an exemplary programme run by the "You are not alone" Centre. The idea is to support the recruitment of persons with disabilities by means of training, capacity-building, development of diverse skills, assistance in finding appropriate employment opportunities and oversight.

Centres run by the private sector

119. Bahrain is well endowed with civil society associations working in the field of disability, especially on behalf of children. They seek to raise awareness and promote competence among children, their parents, and persons working with them and on their behalf. The following is a list of key associations:

(a) The Bahrain Association for Parents and Friends of Persons with Disabilities;

(b) The Enmaa Centre for Special Education;

(c) Al-Amal Special Education Institute;

(d) The Bahrain Association for Special Education;

(e) Al-Rashad Centre for Autism;

(f) The Down Syndrome Care Centre.

120. As noted in paragraph 257 of the second and third periodic reports of Bahrain (CRC/C/BHR/2-3), the Ministry established a complex in the Ali district for persons with disabilities with a view to providing comprehensive care and rehabilitation assistance for persons with special needs in a single geographical environment. The complex provides psychosocial counselling for persons with disabilities to assist them in addressing their psychological and social difficulties and problems, thereby helping them to achieve full integration into society. It also offers guidance and counselling to families of persons with disabilities, helping them to identify positive procedures for dealing properly and correctly with disabilities in the home and the local community. A total sum of BD 5,400,000 was allocated for the purpose. The complex, which is the first of its kind in the region, includes a Centre for Multiple Hearing Impairments, an Autism Centre and a Psychosocial Support Centre. The complex is funded by the Gulf Finance House and comprises an Education and Training Centre that was financed by a Gulf Finance House donation. The Centre implements a continuous training programme for persons with disabilities, their families and field staff working in centres for persons with disabilities run by the governmental, non-governmental and private sectors. It also contains an electronic library, scientific books, periodicals and pamphlets, which can be used as references and to identify scholars and specialists, and which can be accessed by persons dealing with disability-related issues and persons with disabilities.

121. With regard to the Committee's recommendation that Bahrain should guarantee the rights of all children with disabilities in order to protect them against abuse, exclusion and discrimination, and should give them the necessary support to enable them to become full and active members of society, it should be noted that Bahrain guarantees the rights of all children without discrimination, including those of children with disabilities. Section V of the Child Act of 2012 is devoted to the care, education and rehabilitation of children with disabilities. Article 31 of the section stipulates that: "Children with disabilities are entitled to enjoy the same rights as all children and, in addition, to enjoy the rights required by their

status. The State shall ensure that children with disabilities have access to social, health, psychological and educational care and to means of self-reliance, and shall facilitate their integration into and participation in society. The State shall guarantee children with disabilities the right to rehabilitation and access to social, psychological, medical, educational and vocational services to enable them to overcome the impact of disability."

122. The official bodies that are tasked with providing for the welfare of persons with disabilities develop action plans and implement diverse initiatives in the areas of training and rehabilitation, enabling children to lead normal lives, integrating them into society with other children, creating opportunities for their participation in cultural and educational activities and sport, and building their capacities to the fullest extent possible, in accordance with the general principles enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, particularly article 30 concerning the right of persons with disabilities to participate in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport, and the Committee's general comment No. 9 of 2006 on the rights of children with disabilities. The Ministry is convinced of the need to take vigorous action to implement these provisions of the Convention as well as the strategic objectives of the Ministry, especially its third strategic objective concerning the development of social integration and rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities. The Ministry therefore took steps to establish the Salwa Club for Persons with Disabilities with a view to integrating them into morning-time community rehabilitation clubs. The aim is to supplement the rehabilitative and social role played by governmental, non-governmental and private rehabilitation centres by encouraging persons with disabilities who wish to continue building their capacities to spend their leisure time in the morning clubs after leaving the various rehabilitation centres. Persons who were unable to enrol in the various rehabilitation programmes are also encouraged to join the morning clubs so that they may be provided with rehabilitation opportunities in an appropriate setting for their age group.

123. The Salwa Club offers recreational activities that cater to their preferences and contribute to the development of their academic potential and social skills. Its total capacity is 80 beneficiaries of both genders.

124. The High Committee for the Welfare of Persons with Disabilities also organizes campaigns and programmes aimed at raising awareness of the importance of participating in activities and programmes in order to promote the integration of persons with disabilities and to provide them with protection. Civil society organizations and associations engaged in defending the rights of persons with disabilities, especially children, who are the most vulnerable to marginalization and human rights violations, organize various activities and programmes aimed at raising awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities among parents and families and in society as a whole.

125. In addition, the High Committee for the Welfare of Persons with Disabilities, acting alongside persons with disabilities themselves and in partnership with the Information Affairs Authority, develops awareness-raising materials and programmes aimed at promoting the image of persons with disabilities as people who are capable of contributing to society and who enjoy the same rights and freedoms as other people. All media organs are encouraged to portray their image in a manner that guarantees the principle of social partnership, that promotes their individual rights as an effective group in society and that ensures their genuine integration into society.

126. Cultural conferences and events are also held to discuss disability and persons with disabilities, for example:

(a) **The Gulf Theatre Festival for Persons with Disabilities**: The third Theatre Festival, which was inaugurated by the Deputy Prime Minister, was held from 3 to 10 December 2013.

(b) **The Shaikh Nasser Creativity Award for Persons with Disabilities**: The first award ceremony was held in Bahrain in 2012. The Creativity Award was then expanded to the Gulf level and the second ceremony was held in 2013. The award focuses on three areas: science, culture and sport. The cultural area is open to persons with intellectual, physical, motor, hearing or visual impairments, persons with cerebral palsy or autism, and persons with combined disabilities who display creativity in literary arts

(stories, novels, essays, poetry), visual arts (drawing, painting, ceramics, sculpture), music, the performing arts and photography. The sports area is open to persons with physical, motor, hearing or visual impairments and persons with cerebral palsy.

Health and health services

Paragraph 56 of the concluding observations concerning improvement of the health situation of all children and reduction of the level of anaemia

127. Acting on the Committee's recommendation, the Nutrition Section of the Department of Public Health undertook a study in 2012 of the prevalence of iron deficiency anaemia among schoolchildren and adolescents in the 6 to 18 age group. It found that there had been a decline in the percentage of children with anaemia compared with the survey conducted in 2005. The percentage of children in the 6 to 14 age group years declined from 29 per cent in 2005 to 25 per cent in 2011–2012, and the percentage of children in the 14 to 18 age group declined from 22.7 per cent in 2005 to 18.9 per cent in 2011–2012.

128. The incidence of sickle cell anaemia has dropped to below 7.5 per cent in newborn babies thanks to the following action taken by the Ministry of Health:

(a) The premarital screening programme;

(b) Screening of newborn babies;

(c) Screening of secondary school students;

(d) Observance of World Multiple Sclerosis Day.

129. The Ministry of Health, represented by the Nutrition Section, has taken the following vigorous action to prevent and reduce the incidence of anaemia:

(a) Launching of the iron and folic acid flour fortification project in 2001 in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO). The Nutrition Section continuously evaluates the implementation of the project. In 2009 the monitoring procedure was updated and assessed with the assistance of the Food Monitoring Section to ensure that flour fortification is applied by the Bahrain Flour Mills Company;

(b) Provision of iron supplements and folic acid, if necessary, to pregnant women;

(c) Organization of awareness-raising campaigns, lectures and social events to raise awareness among the general public;

(d) Opening of the Centre for Hereditary Blood Diseases at the Salmaniya Medical Complex in February 2014. It is the largest medical centre for hereditary blood diseases in the region with a capacity of 90 beds. It was built according to the highest technical standards, and includes a section for accidents and emergencies as well as specialized clinics that offer therapeutic and diagnostic services to patients, especially those with sickle cell anaemia.

Breastfeeding

Paragraph 58 of the concluding observations concerning the establishment of a national breastfeeding committee and the collection of relevant data

130. In response to the Committee's recommendation, we shall review action taken to promote breastfeeding in this section. Bahrain, represented by the Ministry of Health, has taken steps to support and encourage breastfeeding. It began by establishing the Breastfeeding Committee in 1992 to develop a strategy for the promotion and protection of breastfeeding. It then adopted the international Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative launched by WHO and UNICEF and implemented the 10 steps to successful breastfeeding. In 1993 maternity hospitals and health-care centres run by the Ministry of Health were designated baby-friendly hospitals by WHO and UNICEF.

131. Ministerial Decree No. 7 of 1993 prohibited the free distribution of breast-milk substitutes in hospitals and health-care centres. The Decree served as the basis for the

promulgation of Legislative Decree No. 4 of 1995 on control of the use, marketing and promotion of breast-milk substitutes. It was followed by the promulgation of Ministerial Decree No. 5 of 1996 on the establishment of a committee to control the use, marketing and promotion of breast-milk substitutes. The Committee is tasked with supervising, coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the International Code.

132. A draft resolution concerning the terms and conditions governing control of the use, marketing and promotion of breast-milk substitutes was recently submitted by the Ministry of Health to the Office of the Prime Minister. It was referred to the Ministerial Committee on Legal Affairs at a Council of Ministers meeting in March 2017.

133. The Ministry of Health has issued circulars from time to time aimed at ensuring compliance with the legislation on the marketing of breast-milk substitutes, preventing violations of the Ministerial Decree, monitoring compliance in governmental and private hospitals and clinics and in the media, and ensuring that pharmacies and market places are free of posters advertising substitutes for breast milk.

134. The Select Committee on Breastfeeding in Maternity Hospitals was established to oversee and assess the scale of implementation of the breastfeeding policy in the country's maternity hospitals, to monitor cooperation with the Committee, to assess the level of breastfeeding, and to develop training plans for midwives and nurses in order to promote breastfeeding.

135. The time allowed for mothers to breastfeed their babies was increased from two hours a day for a six-month period to two hours a day for a two-year period, and maternity leave was extended from 45 to 60 days.

136. As the Ministry attached great importance to raising awareness of breastfeeding, in October 2009 it established coordinated posts in maternity hospitals to provide practical support and guidance on breastfeeding in maternity and postnatal wards. In addition, the Breastfeeding Support and Encouragement Group was created to assist breastfeeding mothers and alleviate their difficulties. Mothers who seek assistance or information concerning breastfeeding can obtain a contact list from pregnancy clinics or maternity wards.

137. Maternity and childcare services continue to provide breastfeeding services at prenatal and postnatal health centres and they seek to encourage breastfeeding in child-friendly hospitals by the following means:

(a) Encouraging mothers to begin breastfeeding immediately after birth;

(b) Raising pregnant mothers' awareness of the benefits of breastfeeding, informing them of procedures for dealing with breastfeeding problems, alerting them to the risks of using breast-milk substitutes, correcting any misconceptions, and informing them of the nutrition required during pregnancy and lactation;

(c) Undertaking regular prenatal and postnatal examinations of women's breasts to ensure that the mother is not suffering from any disease;

(d) Encouraging breastfeeding without any additional food or drinks during the first six months of the child's life;

(e) Encourage weaning once the child has reached the age of 6 months with follow-up breastfeeding for at least two years;

(f) Discouraging artificial milk and prohibiting the placement of advertisements for artificial milk in health-care centres.

138. The Department of Health Promotion, in cooperation with the Nutrition Section of the Ministry of Health, has organized numerous lectures, advisory meetings and panel discussions to raise awareness of the importance of breastfeeding. It has also issued awareness-raising pamphlets and guidance brochures for mothers to highlight the importance of breastfeeding and its benefits not only for the infant but also for the mother.

139. The Nutrition Section, which is responsible for breastfeeding and child-friendly hospitals, organized a training workshop entitled "Implementation of the child-friendly

hospital initiative and the law on control of the use, marketing and promotion of breast-milk substitutes" for child and maternity health-care workers in the public and private sectors. The workshop was run by the Regional Coordinator for the Middle East of the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN).

140. Notwithstanding the action taken by the Ministry of Health to encourage mothers to breastfeed and to address breastfeeding difficulties, breastfeeding services still face a number of challenges such as the following:

(a) Although breastfeeding data are included in the National Health Information System (I-Seha), data collection is not yet being conducted systematically;

(b) There is a need for research and studies on the breastfeeding situation in Bahrain and for an assessment of the degree of awareness of its benefits among pregnant women and mothers;

(c) The provision of amenities to facilitate breastfeeding in the workplace constitutes the greatest challenge owing to the complexity of the factors impeding its achievement, especially the prevailing culture. Cooperation and coordination among various bodies will be required to surmount the difficulties and to achieve this goal.

Adolescent health

Paragraph 60 of the concluding observations

141. Acting in response to the Committee's recommendation in this paragraph to establish programmes for the promotion of adolescent health, including education on reproductive health issues, drug abuse, alcoholism and tobacco use, the Ministry of Health has given high priority to promotion of the health of adolescents. For instance, the Adolescent Health Committee established in 1996 addresses adolescent health issues and raises health awareness among young people in cooperation with all relevant governmental and private institutions. The members of the Committee have taken vigorous action to promote adolescent health. For instance, a new clinic for adolescents was opened in 2012 to supplement the clinic opened in 2009. The Committee also organized the first Arab Conference on Adolescent Health, which was hosted by Bahrain in June 2006, and the first meeting of the Gulf Committee for Adolescent Health was held in 2010.

142. With regard to cooperation with WHO, a comprehensive study and analysis of the current situation of adolescent health in Bahrain was undertaken by means of the Service Availability and Readiness Assessment (SARA) tool, which is used by the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean.

143. The "*Shababiyat*" web page for young people, which was established on the website of the Ministry of Health, won first place in a Gulf media contest. Its goal is to provide correct health information for adolescents in response to their questions and inquiries and to keep track of the programmes and activities of the Adolescent Health Committee.[9]

144. As part of the Ministry of Health's strategy to improve adolescent health, the National School Health Programme has been implemented in cooperation with the Ministry of Education. It includes child and adolescent health-care services and a range of preventive and therapeutic programmes and services. Priority is given to the early detection of harmful behaviour and risk factors in order to provide appropriate guidance and treatment. A Coordinator of the Health Programme was appointed within the organizational structure of the School Health Section. The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education have also set up a Coordination Committee to discuss common themes, such as inclusion of health and reproductive health issues in educational curricula.

145. The Mental Health Group in the School Health Section delivers regular lectures to parents and students about behavioural and psychological problems such as obstinacy, learning difficulties, aggressive behaviour and speech difficulties. The Department of

[9] Link to the *Shababiyat* website.

Health Promotion also delivers diverse lectures to students and parents in health-care centres and schools on promotion of the organic health of children and adolescents.

146. With a view to raising awareness of child and adolescent health, the Gulf School, Adolescent and Youth Health Day is celebrated on 30 September each year. A youth-related health theme is selected for the organization of events, including educational workshops, within and outside schools.

147. With regard to girls in particular, the "Impact of the quality of life" section of the National Strategy for the Advancement of Bahraini Women focused on a number of programmes targeting female students and addressing all physical and psychological issues and the necessary life skills.

148. An Adolescent and Youth Health Group was also established. It developed a plan to implement awareness-raising programmes for male and female students concerning health in general, health patterns and, in particular, reproductive health. The key programmes are described below:

(a) Reproductive health and puberty programme for adolescents (*Kabarna*)

149. The *Kabarna* programme was designed and launched in 2014 by Rahid Wadana. The programme aims to improve adolescents' reproductive and puberty-related health by defining puberty and explaining and clarifying the most important physical, psychological and social changes that adolescents face during this time of life. The programme is implemented by school health-care staff and it also provides for the training of school nurses. Interesting, diverse and appropriate means are used to provide the young people with advice and guidance on how to avoid risks and setbacks during this stage of their lives. The programme had covered 75 per cent of targeted schools by 2015/16 and it is currently being expanded to encompass all secondary school students throughout Bahrain in a manner that ensures its sustainability. With that end in view, more specialists will be trained in order to increase the number of qualified staff in the field of adolescent health. The following are some of the main programme themes:

- Physical changes and their causes;
- Psychological changes and how to deal with them;
- Nutritional requirements and physical activity;
- Personal hygiene, hair and dental hygiene, acne;
- Life skills (acceptance of one's physique, how to say no, choice of friends).

(b) Comprehensive preliminary examination of intermediate and secondary school students

150. The aim of the programme is to evaluate the health condition of intermediate and secondary school students and to diagnose at an early stage any ailment or indisposition that may adversely affect their academic performance in school or their lives outside the school by conducting examinations of their eyesight, hearing, and oral and dental health, undertaking a haemoglobin test and calculating their body mass index. The programme also provides for an examination of positive and negative adolescent health habits, such as smoking and dietary habits, and endeavours to raise the health awareness of students and their parents, and to provide them with information regarding aspects of their health as well as procedures for encouraging positive aspects and combating negative aspects. Cases of ill-health are monitored and all data on the health, social and psychological condition of students are recorded. The programme was implemented in 2012 in health-care centres, in coordination with competent bodies in the Ministry of Education, on behalf of intermediate-level students and began to be implemented in 2014 on behalf of secondary-level students. The Ministry of Education also agreed that the examination should be compulsory. The Ministry of Health is proud to have achieved 75 per cent coverage of the target group, and the procedures for incorporating the results of the screening service in health-care centres are now being finalized in the National Health Information System (I-Seha).

(c) Programme for the completion of vaccinations of intermediate-level students (at stages I and II)

151. The aim of the programme is to enhance protection against infectious diseases and newly emerging diseases, to raise the rate of immunization against infectious diseases and to prevent the spread of diseases among students.

(d) Vision and spine examination programme for students in public schools

152. The programme seeks to ensure the early diagnosis of spinal degeneration among students in order to prevent the condition from deteriorating and affecting the students' health. It also seeks to improve school services and care for students with spinal degeneration and vision impairments.

(e) Programme for Peer Health Education in collaboration with the international Youth Peer Education Network (Y-Peer Education)

153. The School Health Section organized the first training workshop for trainers under the Programme for Peer Health Education in May 2016 in coordination with the Ministry of Education. Male and female students were trained and provided with communication skills to raise their health awareness and produce a positive impact on their peers.

154. The Youth Peer Education Network began its work in 2008 in Bahrain through the then General Organization for Youth and Sports. It is an international peer-to-peer network on the dangers of alcohol and drug abuse and on reproductive health. It also raises awareness of HIV/AIDS, its transmission and associated risks. The Network is currently operating in 48 countries throughout the world and Bahrain is the only country that hosts it in a governmental institution.

155. The School Health Section monitors selected students in order to provide them with new skills and material and scientific support so that they can communicate sound health-related data to their peers and select those who possess the requisite knowledge and ability to become trainers at the next stage. An additional group of children and young people is then trained so that the programme covers as many students as possible.

Anti-smoking measures

156. Bahrain acceded to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in 2007. The Convention seeks to develop an international agenda for tobacco legislation aimed at reducing and promoting the cessation of tobacco use. Its provisions include, on the one hand, measures to reduce the demand for tobacco products and, on the other, measures to limit the supply of tobacco products.

157. Action was taken to implement the provisions of the Convention, and Act No. 8 of 2009 on combating smoking and all kinds of tobacco was promulgated. Anti-smoking measures were given a major boost. The National Committee to Combat Smoking and All Kinds of Tobacco, headed by the Minister of Health and comprising representatives of various governmental sectors, was established to support the measures taken by the Ministry of Health to combat smoking. It should be noted that the National Committee to Combat Smoking has adopted the MPOWER strategy as the basis for action to combat smoking in Bahrain.

158. Bahrain has given high priority to the prevention of tobacco consumption among children and adolescents. According to the Global Youth Tobacco Survey of young people in the 13 to 15 age group, which was conducted in 2003 in Bahrain, 23.3 per cent of persons of both genders had consumed tobacco at the time. Half of them had bought cigarettes directly from points of sale in Bahrain, and they had not faced any opposition from the seller, despite their age, in 75 per cent of cases. According to the results of a similar survey conducted in 2015, the percentage of tobacco consumption had declined to 17.7 per cent, while the proportion of young people who bought the products from points of sale stood at 66 per cent and the proportion who faced no opposition from the seller stood at 60 per cent.

159. More vigorous action has therefore been taken to monitor compliance with the Act on combating smoking and tobacco, particularly with a view to reducing the consumption of tobacco by children. The Act prohibits the sale of tobacco to persons under 18 years of age and their involvement in selling tobacco. It also prohibits persons under the age of 18 from frequenting designated smoking areas. In addition, the Act prohibits the admission of products containing advertisements or publicity for tobacco and tobacco products, such as sweets or toys, for the purpose of selling them or using them for some form of display. It is also prohibited to import or admit automated tobacco selling equipment to Bahrain, to use such equipment, and to sell cigarettes, tobacco and tobacco products in a manner that is directly accessible to the purchaser.

160. Inspectors from the Anti-Smoking and Tobacco Group of the Department of Public Health conduct regular inspection visits to all points of sale and other places where tobacco is available in order to ensure compliance with the Act. In the event of a violation, an arrest warrant is issued and the offenders are referred to the Public Prosecution Service for appropriate action.

161. The Ministry of Health is also taking assiduous action to provide tobacco abstention services for all those wishing to quit smoking, especially children. They are given priority appointments in the clinic and provided with all available assistance in terms of moral and medical support.

162. Courses were also held for school nurses and social supervisors in governmental and private schools. They were trained to provide help and advice to students wishing to quit tobacco and to arrange for coordination with clinics in order to monitor their condition.

163. It should be noted that, by the end of 2015, young people under the age of 18 years attending tobacco cessation clinics had achieved a cessation rate of 39.5 per cent. This is an excellent rate compared with the global average, since 25 per cent is deemed to be an indicator of clinical success.

164. The Ministry of Health, represented by the Department of Public Health, has also taken vigorous action to combat smoking and addiction. The following is a list of the key measures taken:

(a) Development of a sustained awareness-raising and counselling programme to combat smoking and addiction through health-care centres, schools and clubs;

(b) Coordination among authorities responsible for handling smoking and addiction;

(c) Opening of anti-smoking clinics in three governorates: the Hamad Kano Centre in Riffa in the Southern Governorate; Al-Hoora Health Centre in the Capital Governorate; and the Bank of Bahrain and Kuwait Health Centre in Al-Hadd in Muharraq Governorate;

(d) Launch of the anti-smoking mobile clinic (a smoking cessation clinic and a primary health care anti-smoking group);

(e) Participation in local health exhibitions to raise awareness of the harmful effects of smoking;

(f) Celebration of World No Tobacco Day through an open-day event in Doha Arad, which was attended by a large number of families and their children;

(g) Organization of training workshops for health-care workers and staff at the smoking cessation clinic;

(h) Coordination with the Ministry of Education with a view to incorporating educational material on combating non-communicable diseases and on healthy lifestyles into school curricula and activities on a methodical and continuous basis and at an early age;

(i) Implementation of awareness-raising campaigns for children and adolescents to familiarize them with their physical and psychological health problems and to indicate how they should be handled.

IX. Education, leisure and cultural activities (articles 28, 29 and 31 of the Convention)

Paragraph 62 (a), (b), (c), (d) and (e) of the concluding observations

Education, including vocational training and guidance

Kindergartens:

165. Bahrain recognizes the importance of integrating preschool education into basic education, as discussed in paragraph 213 of its second and third periodic report. However, the achievement of this goal is still impeded by a number of factors, first and foremost the material dimension, since a significant increase in the budget allocated to education is required. Clearly, this does not prevent Bahrain from seeking to surmount all other obstacles. In addition to completing its plan to incorporate pre-education into the formal education system, it supervises, monitors and evaluates private institutions that provide preschool education in all regions of Bahrain, in accordance with the applicable legislation, implementing regulations and ministerial regulations, in order to ensure that they are capable of achieving the objective for which they were established.

166. The Ministry of Education applies a strict system to applicants for licences to open kindergartens and requires the managers to renew their licences every three years, following a review to ensure that the kindergartens meet all relevant conditions and standards, and that they have secured the approval of the General Directorate of Civil Defence, the municipalities and the General Directorate of Traffic. If the kindergarten fails to meet the requirements for renewal of its licence, the Ministry grants it sufficient time to amend and rectify its conditions under continuous supervision. Licences were recently renewed for 75 kindergartens, in which the conditions were fully rectified, and for 42 kindergartens, in which the conditions are currently being rectified. The Ministry is also monitoring the situation in 16 kindergartens for which the licence is pending (see tables Nos. 14 and 15).

167. The Kindergarten Department also develops training programmes for kindergarten teachers, in coordination and partnership with the Childhood Study Centre at the University of Bahrain and the *Tamkeen* (Empowerment) funding agency, in order to train field staff in the application of a self-learning methodology. The following programmes have been implemented:

I. The preparatory training programme:

168. This is a training programme on kindergarten teaching skills for third-level (preparatory) kindergarten teachers. It focuses on the definition of the kindergarten level, the characteristics of children attending kindergartens, the curricula of different kindergartens, learning-related skills, and the definition of appropriate teaching and learning activities and strategies. Its objectives include:

(a) Familiarization with the developmental characteristics of preschool children;

(b) Familiarization with kindergarten curricula (activities, diverse subjects, learning-related skills, the Montessori Method, etc.);

(c) Study of the learning-related skills approach, and demonstration of activities, strategies, teaching aids, methods of self-assessment and assessment of the child's performance;

(d) Development of kindergarten planning methods (circles, playground, meals, core subjects, end-of-day meeting);

(e) Development of kindergarten teaching and learning strategies;

(f) Development of resource learning strategies (mathematics, Arabic language, civic education).

II. In-service training programme:

169. This is a training programme on implementation of the learning-related skills approach. It focuses on the identification of skills and their importance in children's lives, weekly and daily learning-skill planning, and implementation of some model preliminary learning-related skills, with the following aims:

(a) Identification of all learning-related skills and their importance in children's lives;

(b) Development of daily and weekly planning methods for each skill;

(c) Implementation of examples of activities pertaining to each learning-related skill;

(d) Building of the capacity to teach subjects to kindergarten children (mathematics, the Arabic language, etc.);

(e) Building of the capacity to prepare teaching aids for kindergarten children.

170. With regard to recommendation 62 (b) concerning steps to ensure that primary and secondary education is provided free and rendered compulsory for all children without discrimination, the Ministry of Education aspires to provide free public educational services to all children, both citizens and non-citizens. Article 1 of the Education Act stipulates that: "Basic education is the stage of compulsory education that begins when the child reaches the age of 6 years and it continues for at least nine years. Compulsory education ends at the age of 15 years."

171. The concept of compulsory education requires not only that education should be available free of charge to all. It also requires coverage of direct or indirect costs, which should not be payable by the child's guardian, including free and safe transport to and from school and other indirect costs, such as fees for certain school-based and other activities, which may prevent some children from enjoying their right to education. The school administration also provides free uniforms for children from low-income families. In addition to free basic education, Bahrain guarantees free secondary education in governmental educational establishments.

172. Bahrain is committed to ensuring that educational establishments are located in an appropriate geographic environment and are spread throughout the country. Pursuant to article 1 of Education Act No. 27 of 2005, the Ministry of Education is required to provide a school "if more than ten students are enrolled for purposes of formal education".

173. Children in residential care homes are also enabled to continue their education by enrolling in the schools attached to such shelters, which were described above. They are enrolled at the level they have reached and are admitted, once they reach the next level, to schools run by the Ministry of Education so that the students may continue their education.

174. In April 2017, a number of members of the legislature proposed imposing an annual tuition fee of BD 400 per student (just over US $1,000) on 16,000 students enrolled in public schools. The proposal caused confusion among immigrant families living in Bahrain and among Bahraini families, The Minister of Education and the Bahraini general public therefore challenged the proposal on the ground that it was incompatible with the right to free basic education for all children living in Bahrain enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

175. In accordance with the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Government of Bahrain continues to allocate a larger budget to education each year in order to build and open new schools to cater for the annual increase in Bahraini and immigrant children, which has led to a growing demand for schools, teachers, teacher training courses and other services. As the State has steadily increased allocations to education, there has been a marked increase in the budget (see para. 54 (e) of the present report).

176. With regard to vocational training opportunities, Bahrain has taken steps to diversify secondary education in order to meet the needs of the country and the labour market. Students are prepared on completing secondary education to enrol in universities or

technical colleges, depending on the student's ambition to pursue a specific career or to join the labour market immediately after leaving school. Secondary school studies last for three years and are split into a number of categories:

(a) General secondary education;

(b) Technical and industrial education;

(c) Religious education.

177. With regard to the provision of vocational training opportunities for boys and girls, Bahrain has provided four commercial technical schools for girls and two for boys. There are also three industrial schools for girls and four for boys. As the demand for technical and industrial education is limited, there is no need to open any more schools. The existing schools are located in different regions of Bahrain and the number of students in all disciplines totalled 6,666 in 2016. Courses in industrial schools last for three years. First-year studies are general and specialized courses begin in the second year.

178. The curricula in commercial schools are the same for girls and boys. The curricula in industrial schools comprise the following specialized courses:

(a) Motor vehicles;

(b) Operation of machines;

(c) Welding and manufacturing;

(d) Diesel engines;

(e) Refrigeration and air conditioning;

(f) Plant maintenance;

(g) Electricity;

(h) Electronics;

(i) Computer technology and maintenance;

(j) Mobile technology;

(k) Maintenance of medical equipment;

(l) Office equipment;

(m) Multimedia and information and communications technology.

179. All these courses are available to boys. The only courses for girls are "Maintenance of medical equipment" and "Computer technology and maintenance". Girls are unwilling to study other disciplines because employment in those areas is restricted to males.

180. In addition to the specialized courses offered by the Ministry of Education, the INJAZ Bahrain organization provides training in business administration for students in public secondary schools.

INJAZ Bahrain:

181. INJAZ Bahrain is a leading non-profit-making organization established in 2005 that seeks to empower young people economically during their studies. Recognizing the importance of involving the private sector in achieving its objective of empowering young people to achieve economic success, INJAZ Bahrain has developed strategic partnerships with a number of leading institutions and has incorporated them into its Board of Directors.

182. The most important and largest programme of INJAZ Bahrain is the "Company" programme, which is implemented in schools and universities as part of the academic curriculum. The programme provides students with opportunities for unrestricted creativity as it is designed to serve as an important source of economic and business experience in their lives. Students create their own company under the supervision of voluntary private-sector mentors. Students are also equipped with the necessary skills and encouraged to become successful entrepreneurs in the future.

183. Students are also given the opportunity to take part in competitions in order to motivate them to innovate and highlight their outstanding economic projects. INJAZ organizes a regional competition, known as the "INJAZ Al-Arab Young Entrepreneurs Competition" in the first semester of each academic year. All winning teams in the competition are honoured at the local level. The "Company" programme familiarizes school and university students in the 16 to 22 age group with basic concepts relating to business, entrepreneurship and economics. INJAZ Al-Arab held the INJAZ Al-Arab Young Entrepreneurs Competition in Manama in November 2016 in cooperation with INJAZ Bahrain and the Ministry of Education. The goal of the initiative is to create and develop successful, inspiring and innovative leaders.

184. The Ministry of Education is collaborating with INJAZ Bahrain in promoting vocational education for entrepreneurship in the country. To date, more than 90,000 students have attended training courses on obtaining access to job opportunities, entrepreneurship, development of basic business skills, and cultivation of financial literacy with a view to starting and running their own enterprises and keeping pace with the increasing demand for skills in the private sector. INJAZ Bahrain, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, provides entrepreneurship programmes for more than 187 schools and 12 universities in Bahrain in order to train and capacitate more than 20,000 students each year, with the assistance of about 3,500 diverse private-sector volunteers.

Aims of education

185. With regard to the recommendation in paragraph 63 of the concluding observations concerning the inclusion of human rights and the child rights in school curricula, it should be noted that the modernization and development of education includes determined and continuous action to incorporate the basic principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in line with the democratic approach adopted by Bahrain, such as ensuring respect for freedom of opinion and equality of opportunity in education, and providing for the welfare of all sectors of society by promoting human rights concepts and ensuring the daily exercise of rights and duties. The Ministry of Education was also involved, as a member of the League of Arab States, in various stages of development of the Arab plan to foster a human rights culture. It has also benefited from various international reports, including the Arab Plan for Human Rights Education. The Ministry of Education established a team pursuant to Ministerial Decree No. 1280/M.A.N./2009 to prepare a national human rights education plan. The team achieved the following results:

(a) Development of a conceptual framework for human rights education;

(b) Development of a road map for the team's work;

(c) Preparation of a draft strategic plan for human rights education;

(d) Preparation of human rights training programmes and workshops.

186. The first workshop, which was held on 1 April 2010, dealt with human rights education, building of a culture of constructive dialogue among all school staff, and clarification of the role of Ministry of Education departments in the implementation of the human rights education plan. The workshop was attended by 70 leaders and experts in the field of education.

187. In the academic year 2014/15, the Ministry of Education announced the "School for Civics and Human Rights" project, which is a continuation of the Ministry's project to promote the civics curriculum, which it has been implementing since 2004/05 and which is viewed as a component of the reform project of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, the King of Bahrain. The project focuses on the values of coexistence and tolerance and reflects the local and global need to convert schools into model communities which promote those values.

188. During the pilot phase, the project was launched in four preparatory schools (Yathreb Intermediate School for Girls, Umm Kulthum Intermediate School for Girls, Othman Bin Affan Intermediate School for Boys and Al-Imam Al Ghazali Intermediate School for Boys). With a view to ensuring the success of the project, about 600 teachers and other members of the educational community were trained in the values of coexistence

and tolerance. A civics education kit developed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was used to provide teachers with the skills required to promote such values in classroom and extracurricular activities. The educational environment in the four pilot schools was equipped to facilitate the implementation of the project.

189. The Ministry aspires, through the inclusion of civics as a subject in the Bahraini curriculum, to raise awareness of the values of citizenship and its practical aspects among young people. Such awareness comprises values and concepts relating to freedom, democracy and human rights that are recognized in the legislation of Bahrain and in the international treaties that it has ratified. The study of civics promotes the observance of such principles in communicating and living with others, and contributes to a better understanding of the world, including cultural, religious and ethnic diversity, which is a rich heritage for humankind. The civics curriculum includes the following components:

(a) Civics terminology such as freedom, justice, solidarity and democratic principles;

(b) Identification of political institutions;

(c) Identification of the basic texts applicable to the political system;

(d) Identification of and respect for the basic rules governing social and political life.

190. Civics and human rights were included as subjects in the secondary level curriculum as a starting point. Following their successful implementation at that level, they were revised and included in the primary curriculum with effect from the 2014/15 academic year.

191. A number of activities and games were launched under the project to promote the values of tolerance, coexistence and peace, for example:

(a) "We Advance through Tolerance" is an activity that seeks to define the concept of tolerance and to highlight its importance in schools and its value in society as a whole; another goal is to produce a set of linguistic terms and phrases that promote the values of tolerance;

(b) "Tolerance Enriches our Culture" involves role-changing activities; students are placed in different situations in which their feelings and reactions are measured and assessed; they then change roles and discussions are launched;

(c) The "Intercultural tolerance" activity seeks to develop mutual respect between cultures and to promote a culture of peace and tolerance. The activity includes dialogue sessions between different groups.

Recreation, leisure and cultural activities (art. 31)

192. The State promotes cultural and recreational activities for children and adolescents in the area of leisure, recreation and cultural activities. A number of governmental bodies organize the following activities and programmes in order to meet the needs of children and adolescents:

1. The Ministry of Labour and Social Development:

193. **Clubs for children and adolescents**: The aim is to provide an environment conducive to the development of children's personalities and talents, and to promote their role as active members of society through a variety of literary, artistic, scientific, sports, religious and cultural programmes. The clubs operate through social centres in the different governorates of Bahrain and hold morning and evening sessions throughout the year. They also provide many programmes for students in cooperation with the Ministry of Education.

194. **Summertime activities**: They comprise intensive programmes in areas of interest to children in the 7 to 18 age group. There are also summer camps, including a special children's camp to deal with the aftermath of the "Knights of Peace" camp crises.

195. The children also participate in annual science exhibitions, such as the regional and international scientific exhibition organized by the International Movement for Leisure Activities in Science and Technology (MILSET). The Children and Adolescents Club organizes scientific competitions, including a "robot" competition.

Sharifa Alawadhi Youth and Children Club:

196. With a view to providing a special centralized club for children, the Ministry, with the support of the private sector, established the Sharifa Alawadhi Club as the only club in the region designed specifically for children. It contains all the facilities required for diverse programmes under a single roof, including halls, playgrounds, a swimming pool and many other facilities. The Club is easily accessible and open to all children, and there are no restrictions on registration.

2. The Ministry of Youth and Sports Affairs:

197. The Ministry of Youth and Sports Affairs is the authority responsible for sporting and recreational activities held after the school day is over, on public holidays and during summer holidays. The activities target persons in the 9 to 29 age group through 52 sports clubs and youth centres throughout Bahrain and 35 cultural and social centres. In keeping with the Economic Vision 2030 of the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Ministry of Youth and Sports Affairs launched the National Youth Strategy 2005–2009, followed by the National Youth Strategy 2010–2015, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The Strategy targeted the 15 to 30 age group. It also launched the Strategic Plan for Youth and Sports 2012–2016 (subsequently extended to 2018), which targets more than 40 per cent of the population, according to the 2014 statistics for the 9 to 30 age group.

198. Since the Strategy was launched, many positive initiatives aimed at developing the children and youth sector have been implemented, leading to a significant growth in opportunities and challenges. The Ministry of Youth and Sports Affairs also undertakes joint action with other ministries to promote the participation of children in a wide range of activities and programmes, some of which are listed below:

Youth City 2030 for two groups: the 9 to 14 age group and the 15 to 25 age group:

199. This project provides an opportunity for children and young people to interact positively with the Government's strategic objectives and with the Economic Vision 2030 of Bahrain. The aim of the programme is to prepare students and young people to participate positively in the labour market and to promote entrepreneurial mindsets by providing them with new skills, enabling them to excel and encouraging them to diversify their fields of competence in line with labour-market demand. During a seven-year period, about 354 training programmes were provided in the following four areas: leadership development; science and technology; arts; and the media. Accordingly, children and young people have been provided with 15,605 training opportunities during the past seven years.

Your Voice is Heard for the 15 to 29 age group:

200. The aim of this initiative is to listen to the views of children and young people by means of regular communication and dialogue. The programme is launched each year as a channel of communication prior to the commencement of a new set of activities in order to hear their views, to benefit from their ideas and initiatives, and to include them in the Ministry's executive plan of action. The number of participants in the "Your Voice is Heard" programme during a three-year period totalled 1,003. Special focus groups are established to learn about the attitudes of children and young people in Bahrain, their evaluation of previous activities, and their aspirations and suggestions for future activities with a view to achieving their future aspirations at all levels.

The Red Carpet Festival for the 15 to 25 age group:

201. This event, which was launched in 2015, is a festival of short films produced by children and young people after attending training courses. About 281 young men and women have participated in the programme during the past four years.

Nasser Bin Hamad International Youth Creativity Award for the 14 to 29 age group:

202. This Award attracts children and young people from Bahrain and around the world who are gifted with creativity in a variety of fields. The Gulf version of the award, which was launched in 2012, was followed by an international version. A total of 5,773 participants from 112 countries participated in the latest version.

"Yes, you can" for the 15 to 18 age group:

203. This programme targets secondary school students and is designed primarily to prepare young people for the labour market by developing their entrepreneurship and enabling them to identify opportunities in the surrounding environment. They participate in various training activities, including: home maintenance, car maintenance, computer maintenance, design skills, site building and cooking skills. Three hundred students participated in the programme in 2014.

3. Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities

204. The Authority for Culture and Antiquities organizes a wide range of activities throughout the year on behalf of schoolchildren. The following are some of the most important activities:

(a) Discover Dilmun with Enkiru

205. The club was launched in 2009 as a one-week summer activity involving 30 children in the 7 to 12 age group. In 2014 it was converted into a comprehensive project comprising educational, recreational and cultural activities aimed at attracting children in the evening to events at Qal'at al-Bahrain (Bahrain Fort). Workshops were also held on how to paint the life of Gilgamesh on ceramics, and children were taught through the workshop entitled "Discover Dilmun with Enkiru" to explore archaeological artefacts and to save and preserve them.

(b) Bahrain Summer

206. The programme of the Bahrain Summer Festival contains a wide range of cultural and educational activities aimed at providing families and children with fun and excitement. The programme reflects children's imagination, their craving for knowledge and their love of discovery for an entire month.

(c) Nakhoul City

207. The Authority organizes many activities and programmes during the summer season in Bahrain when people are on holiday. Nakhoul City is a key event. The Children's Corner includes a range of free educational workshops on handicrafts, arts, technology, music, theatre, cookery and other creative areas. It also hosts cultural and artistic performances, films, storytelling and competitions. The event attracts thousands of children for an entire month.

(d) Bahrain International Book Fair

208. At each session, an area is reserved for children and adolescents so that they are motivated to read and study. Cultural and artistic performances, competitions and public activities are also held in the area.

(e) Spring of Culture

209. The annual Heritage Festival and the Spring of Culture include sections dedicated to children. Temporary exhibitions are also held at Bahrain Fort Museum and the National

Museum, such as the Tylos exhibition, an archaeological journey that familiarizes children with the history of Bahrain during the Dilmun civilization.

X. Special protection measures (articles 22, 30, 38, 39, 40, 37 (b)–(d) and 32–36 of the Convention)

Economic exploitation, including child labour

Paragraph 66 (a) and (b) of the concluding observations concerning the elimination of exploitative child labour

210. The Ministry of Labour and Social Development inspects the private sector to monitor the correct and effective implementation of Minister of Labour Decree No. 23 of 2013[10] concerning the conditions and other circumstances regulating the employment of juveniles, as well as arduous and hazardous occupations, industries and types of labour in which they may not be employed or which are prejudicial to the health, safety or moral conduct of juveniles belonging to different age groups. The Decree prohibits the employment of juveniles under 18 years of age in 42 occupations and industries. Article 2 of the Decree also prohibits the employment of juveniles under the age of 16 in all previously prohibited occupations, as well as in jobs that expose juveniles to physical, psychological or sexual exploitation, or that require them to perform illegal activities and acts that expose them to physical, chemical, biological or mechanical hazards or to all such hazards.

211. The Decree also requires the employer, prior to the employment of juveniles, to arrange for a preliminary medical examination before they start work in order to ensure their safety, health and fitness for the type of work assigned to them. The examination must be conducted at the employer's expense. Furthermore, every employer is required, after hiring juveniles, to take steps to have a regular medical examination recorded, with their knowledge, at least once a year and at the end of their service, the aim being to ensure that they are free from occupational diseases and work-related injuries and to maintain their fitness on a continuous basis. The outcome of the medical examination must be reflected in all cases in the resulting health card.

212. The Decree also provides for a number of procedures that strictly specify the responsibility of each monitoring body, including the Ministry of Labour and Social Development through the inspection and occupational safety sections, which are required to conduct regular and continuous inspections of facilities. In addition, it specifies the procedures to be conducted by the Ministry of Health through pre-employment and post-employment inspections.

213. The procedures required by the Decree are applicable to foreigners and to citizens of both genders and no violations have been recorded. Furthermore, civil society institutions have not monitored any case of juvenile employment in breach of the Decree.

Sexual exploitation and abuse

Paragraph 68 of the concluding observations concerning the design of programmes to improve the situation with regard to child sexual exploitation

214. The number of cases recorded by the Child Protection Centre in 2016 totalled about 428, which is a significantly greater number than those recorded in 2012, namely 257 cases. The increase in the number of cases is due to greater interaction among the parties involved, such as the competent court, which has consulted the Centre's reports, as well as police stations and the Ministry of Education, which has assigned a more active role to the specialist appointed for the purpose. The increase is also attributable to the Centre's acquisition of the community's trust, so that cases of abuse are reported to it without restraint. Furthermore, the Centre raised community awareness of its role and services by

[10] Link to Minister of Labour Decree No. 32 of 2013.

delivering about 56 lectures to a total of 2,043 people in 2013. There is also a growing awareness in society and families in general of the types of exploitation to which their children may be exposed in schools, kindergartens and public places, as a result of action to break the silence on such practices by highlighting them in the media (see table No. 16).

215. In addition, the Centre forwarded reports on cases requiring action by other official bodies, including 10 reports to the sharia courts and 18 reports to the Public Prosecution Service. It has also cooperated with the British Council, the Roval Police Academy, the Sharifa Alawadhi Youth and Children Club, the Ministry of the Interior, the Public Prosecution Service, the Military Hospital and the Ministry of Education.

216. The Centre provides services for children who have been subjected to psychological, sexual or physical abuse, treating cases according to the type of abuse suffered and the victim's age and gender. The Centre has dealt with 37 cases of extreme neglect, 73 cases of psychological violence, 324 cases of physical violence and 107 cases of sexual violence. The harshest treatment was recorded for children in the 11 to 15 age group (133 cases), followed by children in the 6 to 10 age group (207 cases) and infants in the 0 to 5 age group (90 cases); 11 cases of abuse were recorded for young people in the 16 to 18 age group (see table No. 17).

Administration of juvenile justice

Paragraph 69 (a), (b), (c), (d) and (e) of the concluding observations

217. The Public Prosecution Service established the Psychological Support Section, which is supported by social workers, with a view to preventing child victims from being subjected to any psychological harm in connection with an investigation that requires them to present an account of a criminal incident and to summon it up again in their memory, and with a view to preventing psychological harm stemming from the possibility of confrontation with the offender. In light of these considerations, the Public Prosecution Service has allocated an interrogation room that takes into account the child's psychological condition, and is equipped with the technical means to conduct remote confrontations without personal confrontation with the accused.

218. The judicial treatment of children and adolescents under the law and in line with the above-mentioned instructions may be summarized as follows:

(a) A special prosecution service, namely the Family and Child Prosecution Department, is mandated to investigate criminal cases involving juveniles. It is equipped with the means and tools required to prevent juveniles from feeling that they are being subjected to abnormal proceedings.

(b) Accused juveniles must be interviewed in the presence of a specialist from the Psychosocial Support Section of the Public Prosecution Service in order to facilitate interaction with the children, to ensure that they are psychologically prepared to accept the proceedings, and to provide them with psychological support. The social worker provides a series of reports on the juvenile during the investigation.

(c) The law absolutely prohibits the Public Prosecution Service from placing juveniles in pretrial detention. They may only be referred to the juvenile court for the purpose of having it consider whether a supervision warrant should be implemented by handing them over to a parent or guardian for care and upbringing, to persons mandated to do so by family members, or to other trustworthy persons in the absence of those mentioned above. The Court may, depending on the circumstances, order that the juvenile be placed in a social welfare institution for a renewable period of not more than one week.

(d) During the investigation of juveniles, the Public Prosecution Service is bound by the guarantees enshrined in the Code of Criminal Procedure. The most important guarantees are to have their statements heard in full freedom and in suitable locations and circumstances, to allow defence counsel to attend the investigation and to present a defence, and to maintain the secrecy of the investigations. When children are being investigated, the members of the Public Prosecution Service must take their age into consideration to prevent the investigation having an adverse psychological impact.

219. As Bahrain continues to seek ways and means of providing greater protection for children, in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Ministry of Justice has studied relevant legislation in a number of countries on restorative justice. Visits were also undertaken to the countries concerned to examine their legislation and study its implementation, and consultations were conducted with a number of outstanding international experts in the field of restorative justice. The Ministry then drafted a bill on restorative justice for children and their protection against ill-treatment. The draft contains far-reaching amendments to the provisions of the Child Act promulgated by Act No. 37 of 2012. The following are some of the key amendments:

(a) Deletion of Chapter VII concerning the protection of children from ill-treatment from Act No. 37 of 2012;

(b) Raising of the age of criminal responsibility for children to 15 years at the time of commission of the offence;

(c) Establishment of juvenile courts in Bahrain with exclusive jurisdiction to adjudicate criminal proceedings arising from offences committed by children over 15 years of age at the time of commission of the offence. Specialist panels in all juvenile courts must be composed primarily of social experts, including women, and their attendance is mandatory at all sessions of the judicial proceedings;

(d) With a view to protecting the right of the child to appeal against all judgments, the new bill permits appeals against judgments in criminal cases handed down by the Juvenile High Court to be filed with the Criminal Appeal Court; it also permits appeals against decisions handed down by the Lower Juvenile Court to be filed before the Juvenile High Court;

(e) Establishment of a committee to be known as the Judicial Committee for Childhood, composed of a Judge of the Lower Juvenile Court and a member of the special prosecution services for children. They will be nominated by the Supreme Judicial Council and one of the social experts. The committee may, if necessary, hold meetings in the social welfare institution or hospital where the juvenile in question is placed;

(f) Article 11 of the bill provides, for the first time ever, for restorative measures as an alternative to the penalties prescribed under Act No. 37 of 2012 in order to promote the rights of children suffering from psychological, mental or any other type of disorder that entirely prevents them from exercising control over their conduct;

(g) With a view to guaranteeing the best interests of the child, draft article 12 lists 11 cases of children at risk and specifies a set of measures that should be adopted as an alternative to traditional penalties in such cases. Key measures include: delivery of a rebuke, reprimand, censure or warning; referral of the child to his or her parent or guardian; an apology to the victim or any other person adversely affected by the child's misconduct; placement of the child under the supervision of an adult relative or other trustee; placement of the child under judicial control; placement of the child in a training and rehabilitation programme if his or her situation so requires; prohibition from frequenting certain places; requiring the child to appear at specific times before certain persons or bodies, or to regularly attend counselling sessions; admission of a child suffering from a specific illness to a specialized hospital; placement of the child in a social welfare institution or association run or approved by the Ministry of Labour and Social Development or, in the case of children with disabilities, in an appropriate rehabilitation facility; requiring the child to participate in voluntary activities; assignment of unpaid community work for a specific period to a child over 15 years of age; requiring the child to remain for at least two hours and not more than twelve hours per day within a specific geographical area which he or she is prohibited from leaving; and requiring the child to remain in his or her home for a specific period under the oversight and supervision of the guardian or person responsible for the child;

(h) With regard to the penalties that may be imposed on children, article 30 of the draft bill introduces substantial amendments, in particular: the death penalty and life imprisonment may not be imposed on an accused person who was not more than 18 years of age at the time of commission of the offence. If a child who is over 15 years of age

commits an offence that is punishable by the death penalty or life imprisonment, the offender is liable to rigorous or simple imprisonment for at least one year. If the offence is punishable with fixed-term imprisonment, the offender is liable to simple imprisonment. If a child who is over 15 years of age commits an offence that is punishable with simple imprisonment, the court may impose one of the aforementioned penalties.

220. In the event that children face judicial proceedings, they may contact their parents during their stay at the Juvenile Welfare Centre. They can also exercise daily in the building and the sports hall. In addition, there is a library equipped with various books and the young people are encouraged to visit it regularly. Qualified teaching staff with specialized training in teaching methods and skills are available for purposes of instruction, acquisition of skills and work. The activities of psychologists, social workers and teachers are coordinated to ensure the juveniles' development. They can also continue their education and further studies are encouraged.

221. With regard to the Committee's expression of concern in paragraph 69 (e) regarding the lack of separate housing for detained children aged 15 to 18, we wish to inform you that, following an unannounced three-day visit by the Office of the Ombudsman to the Reform and Rehabilitation Centre for inmates at Jau Central Prison for men from 3 to 5 September 2013, the visiting team submitted a report containing observations and recommendations, which was published by the Office of the Ombudsman on 25 September 2013. It included the following recommendation: "Segregate inmates in the 15 to 18 age group, and find ways of treating them in a manner that meets their different needs." The Ministry of the Interior implemented the recommendation forthwith, allocating separate cells in the new Dry Dock Centre buildings to inmates in the 15 to 18 age group.

222. With regard to the existence of an effective independent mechanism to receive complaints from children, the Office of the Ombudsman receives complaints and requests for assistance from inmates, detainees, persons held in reform and rehabilitation centres or in pretrial detention facilities, including juveniles in the 7 to 15 age group or their relatives, and juveniles in the larger 15 to 18 age group or their relatives.

223. Any juvenile, inmate or detainee belonging to any age group, including the 15 to 18 age group, may file a complaint in any of the following circumstances:

(a) An allegation of the perpetration of an offence of any kind by the staff of the Ministry of the Interior in connection with, during or on account of the performance of their duties;

(b) An allegation that a person has been adversely affected by the act referred to in the preceding subparagraph in the form of loss, damage or exposure to danger;

(c) An allegation of having witnessed the above-mentioned act;

(d) An agent may act on behalf of any of the aforementioned persons (i.e. one of their relatives).

224. The above-mentioned groups may use any of the following procedures to submit complaints to the Office of the Ombudsman:

(a) Use the Office of the Ombudsman complaint boxes located in prisons or detention facilities;

(b) Send the complaint by email to the following address: complaints@ombudsman.bh;

(c) Send their relatives to the Office of the Ombudsman;

(d) Send the complaint form by regular mail to the following address: P.O. Box 23452, Kingdom of Bahrain;

(e) Call the following number during official working hours: 13308888.

225. In 2015 and 2016 a number of complaints and requests for assistance were received by the Office of the Ombudsman from juveniles under 15 years of age and in the 15 to 18 age group, as shown in table No. 18. The complaints concerned offences perpetrated by staff of the Ministry of the Interior that required legal action against the persons targeted by

the complaints for breaking the law or failing to comply with decrees or labour regulations. Steps were also taken to identify any contravention of operational action and procedures, such as ill-treatment of persons and assaults on their physical integrity.

226. The Ministry of the Interior organizes training courses in all areas for its staff and promotes awareness of human rights by means of special theoretical materials, practical training and foreign missions, in order to ensure that they perform their duties and fulfil their lofty mandate to protect the country's resources and assets and to maintain the security and safety of citizens and residents in a manner consistent with the proper implementation of the law and the achievement of justice. Extensive training programmes have been organized on the regulations governing law and order and on compliance with all international norms, especially the Convention against Torture, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Bahraini legislation, in order to inculcate human rights concepts among the staff of the Public Security Forces. The following are some examples:

(a) Organization and implementation of specialized legal training courses to promote the protection of human rights, particularly in the areas of law and order, stop and search, arrest, detention, and the regulations governing the use of force and firearms. The courses are held periodically under the Ministry of the Interior's annual training plan;

(b) The Royal Police Academy organizes academic programmes such as the following:

- Incorporation of a core subject into the master's degree programmes in criminal, administrative and security sciences, namely protection of human rights under international law and international humanitarian law, in order to promote a human rights culture among security officers by defining such rights, specifying how they should be protected at the religious, national, regional and international levels, and highlighting security performance regulations aimed at protecting citizens' rights and freedoms and focusing on constitutional, legal and judicial guarantees;
- Introduction of the human rights diploma based on studies for a full academic year. It is the first diploma that focuses specifically on matters pertaining to a human rights culture.

227. In addition, the Public Prosecution Service continuously organizes and participates in conferences, seminars, workshops and lectures aimed at training its staff, enhancing their legal competence and building their social capacities to interact with children. The instructions issued to the staff of the Public Prosecution Service highlight the need to cooperate and coordinate with bodies concerned with children's affairs, to provide all kinds of support to promote their best interests and ensure their protection, and to identify the best possible procedures for dealing with them.